



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

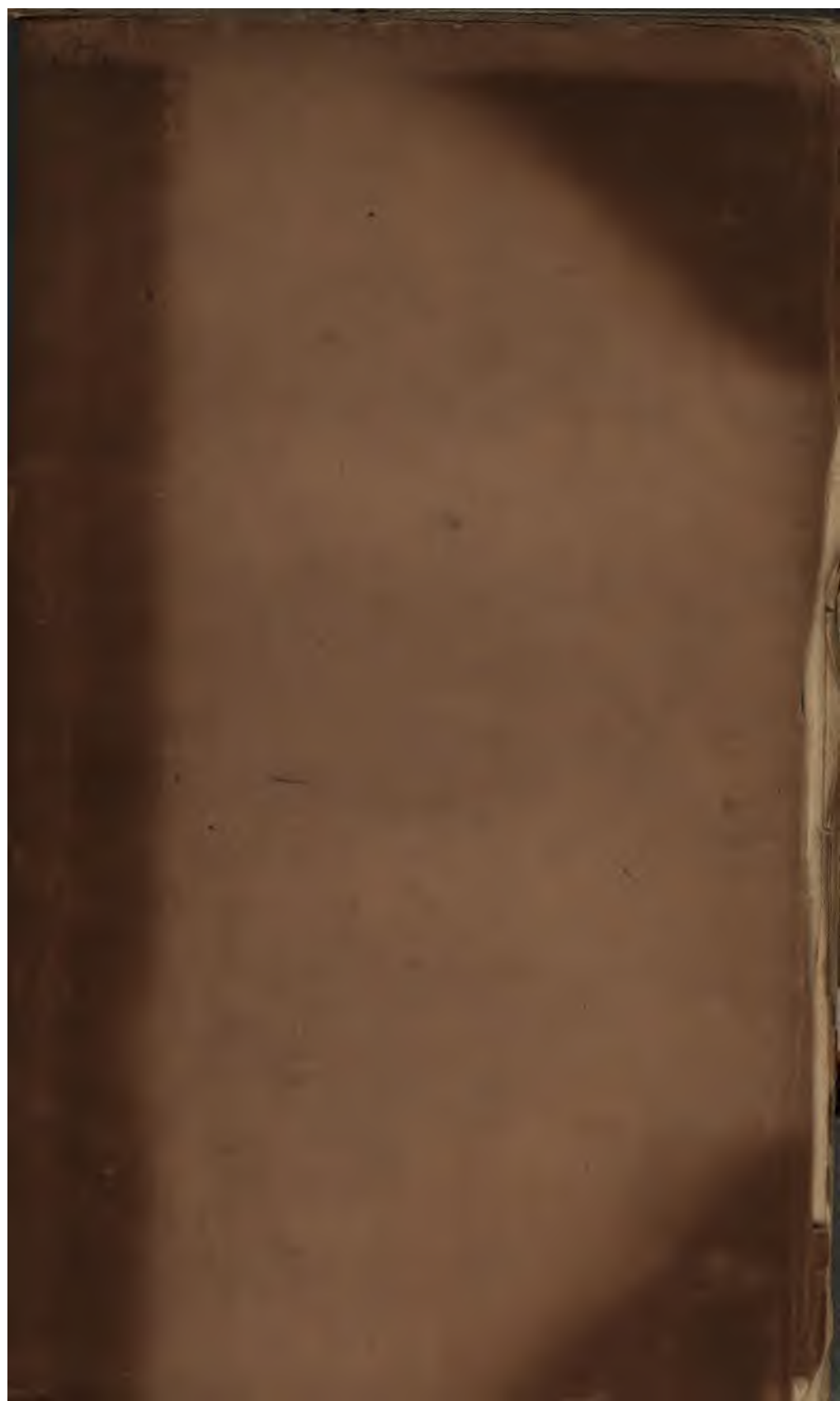
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





600007754T

34.

604.



1/20

A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY
OF
THE REGIUM DONUM,
AND
PARLIAMENTARY GRANT,
TO
POOR DISSENTING MINISTERS.

A SKETCH OF THE HISTORY
OF
THE REGIUM DONUM,
AND
PARLIAMENTARY GRANT,
TO
POOR DISSENTING MINISTERS
OF
ENGLAND AND WALES;

WITH
A VINDICATION OF THE DISTRIBUTORS AND RECIPIENTS
FROM THE CHARGE OF POLITICAL SUBSERVIENCY.

57

By THOMAS REES, LL.D., F.S.A.



TO WHICH IS ADDED
AN APPENDIX,
CONTAINING
A BRIEF STATEMENT OF THE REGIUM DONUM AND PARLIAMENTARY
GRANT TO POOR DISSENTING MINISTERS; BY THE TRUSTEES.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMAN,
PATERNOSTER-ROW;
AND R. HUNTER, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

1834.

604.

**PRINTED BY RICHARD TAYLOR,
RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET.**

SKETCH OF THE HISTORY
OF
THE REGIUM DONUM,
&c.

IT is generally known that for a long period there were distributed among the poor Protestant Dissenting Ministers of England and Wales small annual or occasional Exhibitions from a fund which, because specially granted for their use from the King's privy purse, was designated the *Regium Donum*, or "Royal Bounty." Of late years this fund has assumed the character, and obtained the name, of a "Parliamentary Grant;" the House of Commons, for reasons that will be hereafter explained, having deemed it expedient to relieve the privy purse from the payment of this money, and to provide for the object contemplated by it, among certain other of the "Royal Charities," by a special vote in the Miscellaneous Estimates of the year.

This fund, under both its designations, has been, by a certain portion of the Dissenting public, regarded with disapprobation. They have thought that such a boon, proceeding from the Sovereign, through the Minister for the time being, was open to grave suspicion and distrust as to its design and influence,

and was liable, if not expressly intended, to be used for sinister political purposes, incompatible with the honour and detrimental to the interests of the Protestant Dissenting body at large.

Some persons, who have taken this view of the subject, have conceived it to be their duty to bear their public and decided testimony against this exercise of Royal and Parliamentary beneficence; and they have laboured with no inconsiderable portion of zeal and acrimony, to bring the fund itself into disrepute, and to hold forth those who have been entrusted with its management to general odium and reprobation as men of profligate principles, the willing agents and subservient tools of corrupt and corrupting statesmen.

In the discussions which have lately taken place among the Protestant Dissenters in different parts of the kingdom, with a view to an application to the legislature for the extension of their civil privileges, the complaints against the "Royal and Parliamentary bounty" have been revived with undiminished force and virulence. In some instances, the grant has been raised by its adversaries to the rank of a principal grievance, the redress of which, by its immediate discontinuance, was, in their judgement, indispensable to prepare the way for the removal of the remaining legal disabilities to which they are subjected.

If, however, we scrutinize the reasons that have been alleged for the strong language of censure and reprobation applied to this grant, and its distributors, I do not think it too much to say, with all due deference to the talents and judgement of those who

have employed it, that as far as any of these reasons relate to the subject, they furnish no justification of such unmeasured abuse, and that, for the most part, they have really no bearing whatever upon the case. I have been no inattentive observer of the proceedings of some important and influential bodies of Dissenters by whom this subject has been agitated. My official duties have compelled my attendance upon their deliberations, and I have borne my humble part in their discussions. But without arrogating any superior acuteness of discernment, I scruple not to say that the objections which have been most forcibly and zealously urged against the grant have been altogether grounded upon a misconception of its origin, its nature, and its purpose. Believing, as I confidently do, that very little if any of the clamour, now so loud and strong, against this grant, would have been heard if those who raised or have echoed it had been more accurately informed; and conceiving that a development of the actual facts of the case may tend to silence the outcry and subdue the hostility of those who are essaying to prevail upon the Parliament to discontinue the Bounty, I am induced to submit to their impartial consideration a short sketch of its history, with a vindication of those estimable persons who, in the relation of trustees, have acted as its dispensers, or who, as recipients, have participated of its benefits, against the ungenerous imputations and groundless calumnies by which it has been attempted to imprint an indelible stigma upon their character and reputation.

When it is considered how long an interval has elapsed since this grant was first made, it may be

regarded as not a little fortunate that we should be able at this day to refer for its origin to authentic and incontrovertible testimony. Dr. Edmund Calamy, who lived in the early part of the last century, wrote *Memoirs of his Life and Times*, which he brought down to 1731, the year preceding his death. The manuscript of this valuable work passed to his descendants, and remained deposited in their hands till 1829, when it was properly determined to fulfill the obvious intention of the author by giving it to the public. It was accordingly printed in two volumes octavo, under the able editorship of Mr. J. T. Rutt. In the second volume of these *Memoirs*, (pp. 464–467,) under the year 1723, Dr. Calamy writes as follows :—

“1723.—About this time His Majesty was pleased in a private way to give the Dissenters a considerable taste of his Royal bounty and kind regard to them by an annual allowance. The first motion for it was made by Mr. Daniel Burgess, who had for some time been secretary to the Princess of Wales. He of his own head, out of good will to those among whom he had had his education, moved for something of that kind to the Lord Viscount Townshend, who readily fell in with it, and afterwards discoursed his brother Walpole about it, who also concurred. Upon its being mentioned to the King, he was very free to it, and soon ordered 500*l.* to be paid out of the Treasury for the use and behoof of the poor widows of Dissenting ministers. And some time after 500*l.* was, upon application made on that behalf, ordered to be paid each half year for the assisting either ministers or their widows

that wanted help, or to be applied to any such uses as the distributors thought to be most for their interest. An order was each half year obtained by Mr. Burgess, payable to Mr. Ellis the surgeon; and when Mr. Burgess received it, he paid it to the following persons, viz.:—Mr. William Tong, Mr. Jeremy Smith, Mr. Merrill of Hampstead, Mr. Thomas Reynolds, Mr. Mathew Clarke, Dr. Joshua Oldfield, Mr. John Evans, Mr. William Harris, and myself; and as any of these persons died, the survivors chose another in his room.

“ It was paid yearly generally; though sometimes I observed (without being able to discover what it was to be ascribed to,) we were passed by and forgotten. An equal dividend was made of the sum received, among those that received it, and each person disposed of what he received as he thought best, generally shewing an account to the rest, how it was disposed of, that so several might not give to the same persons. A charge was given that this matter should be kept secret; nor was there any occasion to make a common talk of it, and I believe it was kept as much a secret as a thing of that nature, with which so many were acquainted, could be well expected to be, though by degrees it became first suspected and afterwards more known than were to have been desired. Nor was this the first instance of kindness of this sort that the Dissenting ministers had received from the Court. Bishop Burnet takes notice, in the reign of Charles II., that the Presbyterian ministers waiting on that prince in a body, there was an order given to pay an yearly pension of 50*l.* to most of them, and of

an hundred pounds a year to the chief of the party.—(See the History of his own Time, vol. i. p. 308.) He says that Baxter sent back his pension and would not touch it; but, says he, most of them took it, and, I can't see why they should not. All this, says he, I say upon Dr. Stillingfleet's word; who assured me he knew the truth of it; and in particular he told me that Pool, who wrote the *Synopsis Criticorum*, confessed to him that he had had 50*l.* for two years. However, in the tail there comes a sting. Thus, he says, *The Court hired them to be silent, and the greatest part of them were so, and very compliant*; which is an unkind reflection that I should have thought might very well have been spared, unless it could have been shewn that they had been *silent* in any matter in which (as circumstances stood,) it was their duty to have spoken with freedom, or *compliant* in any thing that was really blameable, or that had an ill tendency. If silence with regard to the Papists, and their principles and practices, be the thing here referred to, it deserves to be considered that none at that time wrote better against Popery than Mr. Pool in his Dialogues, and his Nullity of the Romish Faith, and Mr. David Clarkson in his tract entitled *The Practical Divinity of the Papists proved destructive to Christianity and the Souls of Men*. And the body of the Popish controversy was gone over by a good number of the very ministers that received this Bounty from the Court, in the Morning Exercise against Popery, which was printed in the year 1675, which was within three years of the time in which this reflection was made on their conduct. And for that

reason it was not just to charge them either with a *silence* or *compliance* of which they were not truly guilty.

“But as for those who received the Bounty of King George I., whose interest was so visibly interwoven with that of his good subjects, and who through the whole of his reign so constantly acted as one sensible that it was so, there was in his reign nothing to be silent about, unless it was the continuance upon the Dissenters of the hardships they were under, of which they oft complained; or to comply in, but their continuance, to which they never could be prevailed with to consent or agree. And yet the Dissenters, having such fair warning given them before hand, upon occasion of what had been done of the same nature formerly, might very well be allowed to be the more cautious of publishing the matter now; and yet thought it became them to receive what was so freely offered them, with great thankfulness both to God and His Majesty. Nor could we be forgetful of Dr. Owen’s having also received a thousand guineas from King Charles II. to distribute among those Dissenters who had suffered most by the severities of his reign; for receiving which he also was reflected on afterwards, though we thought very undeservedly.

“We could not at the same time but very well remember, that when Dr. Daniel Williams in the reign of Queen Anne, and while the Lord Oxford had the ascendant, refused to receive a thousand pounds that was offered him as from Her Majesty to distribute among the Dissenters, which gift was not clogged with any condition, he (though he acted in

the integrity of his heart,) was censured by many as depriving a number that needed help of the benefit they might have this way had. And not knowing how things might in time turn round, we were not willing, if this offer made us should come to be known, to expose ourselves to a like censure. Nor could we indeed see why we might not thankfully accept of such an help as this here in England, as well as our brethren in the North of Ireland, who in the year 1690 had a grant from King William of 1200*l. per annum*, to be paid by quarterly payments ;—(See Mr. Kilpatrick's Historical Essay on the Loyalty of Presbyterians, page 397 :) which, notwithstanding all the complaints that have been made of it by their backfriends, (and particularly of the Irish Parliament, who in 1703 voted this *an unnecessary branch of the Establishment*,) has been continued ever since ; with an addition in the reign of Queen Anne of 800*l. per annum* for the South of Ireland, in which there are fewer meetings and fewer ministers than in the North, in soliciting for which I must own that I myself very freely joined with worthy Mr. Joseph Boyse (who was then in London,) in an earnest application to my old acquaintance the Earl of Sunderland for his interest. Nor would it be an easy thing to give a good and substantial reason, why we that are Dissenters in England, and excluded from the emoluments of the national Church, may not as warrantably receive a thousand pounds a year from the Government, as our Presbyterian brethren in Scotland do, (according to the current and uncontradicted report of our publick newspapers,) in order

to the promoting Christian knowledge in their Highlands. I therefore here give hints of these things, that they may be considered, if this Bounty of King George I. to us and our brethren, should come to be universally known hereafter."*

There are in this statement a few things to which I would direct the more particular attention of the reader ; and first as to the manner in which the grant was obtained.

It was solicited by Mr. Daniel Burgess, sup-

* The following is the account of the origin and objects of the *Regium Donum* given by Doctors Bogue and Bennett in their History of the Dissenters ; from which it is evident these gentlemen had no idea of any corrupt political purpose in the grant. After recording some instances of munificent bequests by private individuals for the relief of necessitous Dissenting ministers, they write :—" But Divine Providence, on which the Dissenting ministers rested for their support, displayed its care in procuring them supplies from a still higher source. King George I. sensible of their attachment to his family and government, was pleased to give them substantial tokens of his affection and bounty, by an annual donation. The matter originated with Mr. Daniel Burgess, secretary to the Princess of Wales. Having received his education among the Dissenters, gratitude influenced him to endeavour to serve their cause. With this view he mentioned his wishes to Lord Townshend, who represented the business to Sir Robert Walpole ; and these two laid it before His Majesty, who was favourable to the measure, and ordered 500*l.* to be given for the use of the indigent widows of Dissenting ministers. The first payment was soon after 1720. In the course of a few years, the gift as well as the object was enlarged, and 500*l.* were directed to be paid half-yearly for assisting ministers who stood in need of relief, or to be applied to such uses as those entrusted with the distribution should think more conducive to the interests of the Dissenting body."—See History of the Dissenters from the Revolution to the Year 1808 ; by David Bogue, D.D., and James Bennett. 4 vols. 8vo. 1810, vol. iii. p. 352 : 2 vols. 8vo, 1833, vol. ii. p. 275.

posed to be the son of the eminent Non-conformist minister of that name, then holding the responsible situation in the Royal Family of private secretary to the Princess of Wales, afterwards Queen Caroline. His first application was made to Lord Townshend, the Secretary of State, probably for some private reason. But the matter not belonging properly to his department, his lordship mentioned it to Sir Robert Walpole, recently appointed First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. These members of the Government, concurring in the benevolent views of Mr. Burgess, reported his application to the King (George I.), by whom the message was very graciously received.

The next thing to be remarked is, the consequent grant of money, and its declared purposes. His Majesty "ordered 500*l.* to be paid out of the Treasury, for the use and behoof of the poor widows of Dissenting ministers." Encouraged by the success of the first, a second application was shortly afterwards made, probably by the same kind intercessor, Mr. Burgess; and an order was given that 500*l.* should be paid each half-year, "for assisting either ministers or their widows that wanted help, or to be applied to any such uses as the distributors thought to be most for their interest;" the interest, that is, as it appears to me, of the poor ministers and widows just named*. It is perfectly manifest

* There is an ambiguity in Dr. Calamy's phraseology; but if the antecedent of 'their' be 'the distributors,' and not 'ministers or their widows,' the writer must have intended their general interests as Dissenters. *Personal* interest they could have none in the execution of their trust.

from this account, that the Royal Bounty thus bestowed was designed for a purely charitable object, namely, to relieve the pressing wants of two classes of deserving persons, enduring, at the time, numerous and severe privations. There is not, in any part of this narrative, the slightest intimation that the royal beneficence was clogged by any conditions, political or otherwise, to be imposed upon the persons who were to act as agents in the application of the fund placed at their disposal; nor is there to be discovered the remotest hint of any stipulations, either as to their principles or their conduct, by which those persons, for whose immediate benefit the money was to be appropriated, were to be bound to the King or the Government.

Dr. Calamy next relates the manner in which the trustees or distributors of the fund were appointed. The Treasury warrant for the money, he relates, was made out in the name of a respectable lay gentleman, Mr. Ellis, a surgeon; but when received by him, the whole amount was paid, through Mr. Burgess, in equal sums to nine Dissenting ministers of the highest character, belonging to the Presbyterian and Independent denominations, each of whom distributed his portion to the proper objects, according to his own discretion. It must be observed that in the choice and appointment of these trustees the members of His Majesty's government took no part; they were selected, apparently, by Mr. Burgess himself, his preference being, no doubt, determined by his knowledge of the peculiar fitness of the ministers named by him to discharge, with the greatest advantage, the important

and delicate duties of their office. As there was no dictation of the Minister of the Crown in the selection of the original trustees, so neither was there any interference attempted in filling up the vacancies created in the trust by the death of the members, the surviving trustees being always left to their own free election in the appointment of their new associates.

The only other point requiring notice is the injunction that the matter should be kept secret. By whom the charge of secrecy was given we are not told. To those who are acquainted with the circumstances of the times, it must, however, be apparent that there might have been valid reasons why such an act of royal beneficence to the poor Dissenting clergy and their widows, should not be ostentatiously blazoned through the country, without resorting to the gratuitous assumption, that the purpose of the grant was so impure as to render it expedient, for the credit of all the parties concerned, carefully to conceal it from the knowledge of the public. The Jacobites, who then formed a large and powerful body, disputing the right of the ruling sovereign to the throne, and engaged in active hostilities against the measures of his government, would, no doubt, have eagerly availed themselves of this act of favour to the Nonconformists, to inflame the religious and political bigotry of their adherents, and confirm them in their discontent and disloyalty. In the feverish state of the public feeling, it was so easy for them thus to convert the grant into an engine of serious annoyance both to the King himself and to the Admini-

stration, that a certain degree of secrecy became necessary as a measure of prudent precaution. That the Royal Bounty could long remain a close secret, was, however, utterly impossible, on account of the number of the gentlemen who were engaged as almoners in the distribution of the money, and of the great multiplicity of persons, scattered over the kingdom, amongst whom it must be divided. It is besides certain that Dr. Calamy, one of the original trustees, did not consider himself pledged to inviolable secrecy; for in narrating the more remarkable events of his times, for the information of posterity, he deemed it proper to write a detailed history of the whole of the transaction, and to place upon record the names of all the persons who had borne any part in it, taking upon himself his proper share of responsibility by the insertion of his own. Aware that some difference of opinion existed, in his time, as to the propriety of such donations from the royal purse, and to anticipate objections that might, possibly, be made to this grant in particular, he "gave hints," he states, "that they may be considered, if this bounty of King George I. should come to be universally known hereafter."

Had Dr. Calamy's representatives printed his work immediately after his death, I have no doubt that most considerate persons among the Dissenters would have been satisfied with his statement, and we should probably have heard nothing of those insinuations and charges to which the Royal Bounty gave rise at a later period. In the absence, however, of accurate information, uncharitable surmises were formed and industriously disseminated as to

the occasion and purpose of the royal grant, which was thought by some to bear a political character, and to be expressly designed to serve party purposes of state policy. But no attempt seems to have been made to attack it through the medium of the press during the long term of fifty years. At last, in the year 1774, an anonymous writer, with lofty pretensions to independence of spirit, to purity of political principles, and to superiority of knowledge as to the sentiments and conduct of the Dissenters, volunteered to dispel the mystery in which, he alleged, the *Regium Donum* had been so long purposely enveloped, and to drag forth the obnoxious grant itself, and its profligate distributors, to the indignation of an injured and insulted public. In the year above named, this person addressed a series of letters to the editor of the London Magazine, the immediate purpose of which was to reprobate the application made in the years 1772 and 1773 to the legislature for an enlargement of the Toleration Act as it affected Dissenting ministers, tutors, and schoolmasters. In the course of these communications he introduced what he was pleased to style a "history" of the *Regium Donum*, in which all the parties who had from the first had any concern with that charity, are unsparingly assailed with the severest censures and the grossest abuse. The confidence of assertion which characterizes the style of this account, and the speciousness of manner with which the writer appeals for illustration to historical facts, had the effect of obtaining for his statements very general credit and belief. It was his direct aim, *per fas aut nefas*, to

bring the Royal Bounty into discredit; and it cannot be denied that he laboured with very considerable success, it being, I think, indisputable that the strong feeling of dislike which, since this period, has been entertained by some Dissenters against this mark of the royal favour, may be referred for its origin to the representations of this author.

In proof of the confidence reposed in the paper in the London Magazine, and of the deep impression produced by it on the minds of some respectable Dissenters, I would remark that in the year 1792, when the *Regium Donum* became the subject of newspaper discussion, and information was solicited as to its origin and nature, this statement was reprinted nearly *verbatim*, as an "authentic account."*

* See "An Address to Protestant Dissenters, on the Origin and Influence of the *Regium Donum*," 12mo. The attack made at this time, in the newspapers, upon the Royal Bounty and the Distributors, drew forth an able reply in a pamphlet entitled "Letters concerning the *Regium Donum*, addressed to the Editor of the Morning Chronicle," which has been ascribed, and I believe correctly, to my venerable friend the late Dr. Abraham Rees. Adverting (pp. 4, 5,) to the anonymous paper in the London Magazine, he writes as follows:

"The history which appeared about twenty years ago in some of our monthly publications, and which you have thought proper to republish in your paper, is notoriously erroneous, and was compiled under the influence of principles and views, or rather of prejudices and passions, by no means honourable to the author. The various circumstances which occasioned that history, and to the truth of which you have given your *probatum est*, were well known to me and to several other persons, who were acquainted with the writer to whom it has been ascribed, at the time of its publication; and if I thought myself at liberty to recite them, they would sufficiently account for the asperity and illiberality which it discovers."

In the year 1796, my excellent friend Mr. George Dyer, having occasion to mention the subject of the *Regium Donum* in his interesting Memoirs of Mr. Robert Robinson, (pp. 235, &c.,) copies the greater part of this account, and animadverts and reasons upon it as if its truth were established and incontrovertible.

A correspondent in the Times newspaper, so late as the year 1828, in a long paper expressly designed to reprobate the Royal Bounty, quotes the same statement at great length, with marked approbation, and adopts it as his sole authority for arraigning the motives and condemning the conduct of the distributors and recipients.

And last of all, even the respected editor of Dr. Calamy's Memoirs, with that excellent and high-minded man's history of the grant immediately under his eye in the text of the book, inserts in the margin, in the form of a note, the statement of the anonymous author, though differing so essentially in its representation of the facts, without either venturing to charge Dr. Calamy with asserting what he must have known to be false, or hinting, for his vindication, a doubt as to the other writer's correctness and veracity.

Since, therefore, the author of the account in the London Magazine has been so much relied upon, and so frequently quoted with confidence and approbation, I shall transcribe a few passages, and examine some of his alleged facts, in order to enable the reader to form his own judgement as to the credit to which he is entitled.

The following is the account given by this author

of the origin of the *Regium Donum*, which he correctly ascribes to the year 1723 :

“ Sir Robert Walpole was then chancellor of the exchequer,—a statesman, who knew too well for the real interests of his country, the passions which are most apt to be predominant in the heart, and whom no man ever equalled in the application of gold. By this, he daily converted his enemies into friends, and so charmed even the flaming votaries of liberty, Dissenting ministers not excepted, as to reconcile them to corruption, and even to court fetters, and rejoice in them. He had observed from year to year the wonderful effects which the smiles of the Treasury bench had on all ranks of men ; and finding that the Protestant Dissenters, after being years trifled with, were moving in earnest to obtain deliverance from their bondage, he closeted a few of their ministers, whom he thought to have the most influence among their brethren, and who would best answer his purposes. In their presence, he wore the mask of friendship and sanctity,—he complimented them on their great abilities,—assured them he had the heartiest zeal for the Protestant Dissenters and their interests,—lamented the poverty and small incomes of many of their ministers through the kingdom, and that any laws should hang over their heads. The reverend gentlemen (like their successors of the present day) were soon overpowered with his condescension, eloquence and goodness. He then declared his readiness to serve them any way, even in parliament, for the repeal of the cruel statutes against them ; but the present year, 1723, ‘ was a very improper time—he, the greatest friend

they had, would not advise them to apply that session : if they did, it would greatly injure, if not ruin the cause ; but the postponing it would greatly promote its success in a future period. A respectful postponing of it was very likely to obtain its success ; whereas to bring it on without any regard to circumstances, or contrary to the advice of the best judges and their most able advocates, might be called rashness, and would do dishonour to the cause.' The language of courtiers and their tools is the same from one generation to another.

" To enforce this reasoning, he drew 500*l.* out of the Treasury, by a warrant payable to a surgeon, and which was paid by another agent into the hands of nine ministers. The bait was, '*Pray, receive this for the use and comfort of the widows of dissenting ministers, TILL ADMINISTRATION CAN MORE EFFECTUALLY SERVE YOUR CAUSE ;*' but a strict charge was given with the money, that the matter should be kept very secret. Grateful Sir Robert ! to conceal the virtues of his royal master, and not suffer his favourites so much as to speak of this considerable taste of royal bounty, which was also promised to be annual.

" Very soon afterwards, the crafty statesman, finding that this money had produced just the same effects in the conversion of these dissenting clergy, as benefices and bishoprics always had done with respect to many ecclesiastical members of the Establishment, he doubled the pension, and ordered that 500*l.* half-yearly should be paid to those nine ministers, and with larger powers, '*to be applied to ANY USE, as the distributors should think proper.*'"

In comparing this statement with that of Dr.

Calamy, the reader will perceive at a glance, that they materially differ in many important particulars. It will then naturally occur to him to ask, Which of the two writers presents the stronger claims to credibility ; Dr. Calamy, a man of unimpeachable integrity, a contemporary of the events he records, writing immediately after their occurrence, himself also a personal actor in the transactions, and giving his name as the pledge of his veracity ; or, an anonymous writer, drawing up his statement fifty years after the time to which it refers, naming no authorities by which his representations can be verified, and necessarily depending for his materials upon vague rumours, or uncertain and unauthenticated traditions ? No intelligent or candid judge can for a moment hesitate in deciding to which party the preponderance of credit must be assigned.

In examining the “ history ” just quoted, the first thing to which I would beg the reader’s attention is the very curious conversation said to have taken place between Sir Robert Walpole and certain Dissenting ministers, not named,—the shallow sophistry by which he is represented as imposing upon their understandings, and the idiotic simplicity with which they are stated to have allowed themselves to be “ overpowered ” and cajoled. It will not, I presume, be deemed very unreasonable to ask, how the writer came to the knowledge of all these extraordinary particulars ? Whence could he have derived his information ? Was his Familiar present at the scene to register the words, the tone, the looks, the gesture of the several speakers

in the colloquy, and convey them with fidelity to his understanding and imagination? If his knowledge came by one of the ordinary channels of communication, could he allege that it emanated from any individual of the persons closeted on this important occasion? If ever there was a transaction in which the actors could deem it necessary, for their mutual credit, to bind one another to strict secresy, this certainly was one of the most urgent nature. The crafty Minister, we may rest assured, with whatever complacent feelings he might have regarded his alleged triumph over the principles of his auditors, would never have been so weak or insane as to divulge a conversation in which he must have appeared as an artful hypocrite, resorting to a mean artifice to impose upon men, who, in a public character, were consulting him on important matters of state policy, involving the interests of hundreds of British subjects. Nor will it readily be believed, that the Dissenting ministers, the dupes of his chicanery, weak and simple though they were, as here represented, would in any circumstances be tempted to divulge the particulars of a conference from which they retired with indelible disgrace. The whole story has, however, the air of a pure but clumsy fable, the creation at once of the fancy and of the malignity of the author.

It would answer no purpose of utility to follow this writer through all the surmises, insinuations, and assertions in which he so freely indulges for the purpose of creating a prejudice in the public mind against the Royal Bounty, and its Distributors. When, however, he professes to be the historian of

public events, connecting with them dates and other circumstances capable of being submitted to a critical examination, it may be of use to investigate some of his statements; because, by the detection and exposure of his misrepresentations in a few important instances, I shall put it in the reader's power to form a tolerably correct estimate of the value of his testimony in any matters resting upon his sole authority.

Referring to what he had related in the passage quoted above, as to the conference of the Dissenting ministers with Sir Robert Walpole, the anonymous author writes as follows:—

“ We have now seen their conduct in 1723; they played the same part in 1732. The Dissenters at that time would have been unanimous in applying for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts, (the reproach of a Protestant State,) had it not been for the arts and influence of the Royal almoners. Their parlour and tavern visits, their circular letters, and easy distribution of pamphlets at no expense to themselves, were fatal to the cause; and the corrupting, deceitful Minister again triumphed; the leaders of the City Dissenters were brought to resolve, ‘ That an application to Parliament for the repeal, or explanation, of the Corporation and Test Acts, is not likely to be attended with success; and that such an application is by no means desirable.’ ”

Having before favoured his readers with his own version of the origin and purpose of the *Regium Donum*, the candid and impartial historian now pro-

ceeds to verify and illustrate his account, by tracing its sinister effects upon the public conduct of its managers: and it is in character, that he should begin with the subject of the Corporation and Test Acts; those statutes constituting the prime affair which, if credit be due to his assertion, led to the profligate barter of their principles.

“The Dissenters,” we are told, “would in 1732 have been unanimous in applying for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts,” had it not been for the arts and influence of the “Royal almoners.” But how does this appear? Where is the proof of their interference to counteract the general feeling and wishes of the Dissenters at this period? Was this writer, when he penned this gross calumny, really ignorant, that at the very time to which he refers the persons who were most forward and active in conducting the movements of the Dissenters of the metropolis, in their appeal to the liberality and justice of the legislature for the enlargement of their civil privileges, were the trustees of the Royal Bounty? The “General Body” of Dissenting Ministers of the Three Denominations, resident in London and the vicinity, took the lead on this occasion. As the laity were, however, so deeply interested in the civil restrictions of the Sacramental Test, they deemed it to be not only courteous, but expedient and important to consult them before they took any decided step in an application for its repeal. It occurred to some of them, that their proceedings would be likely to have much more weight and efficiency if they could bring the mini-

sters and lay gentlemen to cooperate in an united and harmonious body, cherishing the same principles, animated by one spirit, and zealously intent on the accomplishment of the same great purpose, affecting equally their religious feelings and their civil rights. The ministers with whom this plan originated made a formal application to their brethren of the "General Body," to associate with them, *pro hac vice*, "a considerable number of gentlemen of principal weight and figure of the three denominations,.....to consult as to what steps were fit to be taken with relation to the repeal of the Test Act, the next ensuing session of Parliament." This proposal was submitted to the General Body of Ministers at their annual meeting, on the 3rd of October 1732. The majority of the ministers composing that assembly did not, however, approve the plan, conceiving, it would appear, that the subject of the Test Act did not fall properly within their province. They satisfied themselves with voting, "That the civil affairs relating to the general interests be referred to gentlemen."

Who, it may now, possibly, be asked, caused the rejection of this scheme, and so far embarrassed the proceedings of those who were intent on seeking the repeal of the Sacramental Test? Were they not the "Royal almoners," referred to by the anonymous historian? These questions admit of an easy and satisfactory answer. Two ministers were chosen by the "considerable number of their brethren," as most fit to be employed in this honourable mission; and one of them was Dr. William Harris, an eminent and respected minister,

belonging to the Body, and an *original trustee* of the *Regium Donum* *.

Though disappointed by the rejection of their original plan, Dr. Harris, and his reverend colleagues, did not abandon the cause. They took immediate steps to form an association of lay gentlemen belonging to their respective congregations, to deliberate on the course which it might be most expedient to pursue; and it is worthy of notice, that from this first association of the Dissenting laity formed by the laudable exertions of the trustees of the *Regium Donum*, sprang the Society of Lay Deputies from the London Congregations, to whose zealous and faithful services the final success of the application for the repeal of the Sacramental Test is mainly to be attributed.

The first meeting of the lay gentlemen was held at the chapel in Silver Street, on the 9th of November, 1732, a little more than a month after Dr. Harris had made his unsuccessful application to the Body of Ministers. They immediately appointed a Committee of twenty-one gentlemen of the highest rank and consequence among the Dissenters, to take the matter into consideration, and to adopt such measures as to them might seem advisable to bring the subject before Parliament. This Committee held four meetings in the course of the month, in the last of which, on the 29th of November, they came to the resolution, " That

* The other minister was Mr. George Smyth, of Hackney. Dr. Chandler, afterwards a distributor of the *Regium Donum*, was also concerned in these proceedings.

they were of opinion, that an attempt at that time for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts was not likely to meet with success." The Committee reported this resolution, on the same day, to a general meeting of their constituents, who, entertaining a different opinion, refused to approve it. In consequence of this rejection of their vote, the Committee unanimously resigned. An attempt having afterwards been made without success to form a new Committee, the former Committee were again elected, with the addition of four new members. The design being now formed of creating a more permanent body of lay gentlemen, for conducting the civil affairs of the Dissenters, the Committee were instructed "to report their opinion to two persons chosen out of each congregation of the three denominations by the subscribers, within ten miles of London."

On the 28th of December, the Committee reported to their old constituency the resolution mentioned by the anonymous author;—"That an application to Parliament, the ensuing session, for the repeal and explanation of the Corporation and Test Acts is not likely to be attended with success." An amendment being moved and lost, recommending an immediate application, a supplementary resolution was passed, "That such an application is apprehended by no means advisable."

These resolutions, the reader will have seen, are attributed by our anonymous author to the evil agency and polluting influence of the "Royal almoners," through whose machinations, it seems, "the leaders of the City Dissenters were brought

to resolve," &c. Astonishing must, indeed, have been their power to prevail, not, be it observed, upon a few Dissenting ministers, over whom they might be supposed to have some influence, but upon a body of twenty-five lay gentlemen, selected from among persons of noble rank, of great wealth, and of chief importance in the city of London, including the high names of Lord Barrington, of Holden, Brooksbank, Avery, Gould, Abney, and Hollis *, to bow to their dictation, and lend themselves to support the selfish interests of the profligate minions of an unprincipled Administration !

The meeting at which these resolutions were passed was the last held by the original association of lay gentlemen, formed through the instrumentality of Dr. Harris and his friends, after the Body of Ministers had rejected his proposal. On the day following (the 29th of December, 1732,) the Deputies, who by this time had been chosen by the several congregations, assembled for the first time. The old Committee, whose functions had not yet ceased, reported the resolutions for their consideration, and the Deputies concurred in their propriety.

Lest this approval of the Deputies, on their entrance upon the important duties of their new office,

* The following are the names of the gentlemen composing the Committee: Mr. S. Holden, Chairman; Mr. John Jacob; Lord Barrington; Stamp Brooksbank; John Bonel; Richard Cooper; Dr. Benjamin Avery; Samuel Lessingham; Benjamin Mee; Nathaniel Gould; William Snell; Nathaniel Garland; John Hollister; Thomas Abney; James Ruck; George Baker; Peter Hinde; Nathaniel Howard; Joseph Paice, jun.; Francis Wilks; James Bradley. The four gentlemen afterwards added were; Mr. Burroughs; Mr. Leeds; Mr. Bedwell; and Mr. Thomas Hollis.

should also be ascribed to the same sinister agency of the "Royal almoners," I shall here insert for the reader's consideration a few of the reasons which they instructed the Committee to state to the Dissenters in the country, as the grounds of their decision. On the 1st of January, 1732-3, the Committee agreed upon their circular letter. In this they decline, they remark, entering into all the reasons which induced them to come to the resolution they had passed. They state, however, that they had taken every method to obtain the opinion of persons of distinction; and they found their opinion was in general, that the present attempt would be attended with very mischievous consequences, such as endangering the peace of the kingdom, the raising opposite factions, and exasperating men's spirits to a high degree at this critical juncture, and therefore must be by them opposed.

Positive as are the assertions of the anonymous author to the contrary, candid readers will give these honourable men credit for stating what were the real causes of the postponement of the application to Parliament; and every man who knows the state of parties and of public opinion at that period, will be free to acknowledge that the reasons upon which they acted were most valid and conclusive.

Looking, then, to the actual history of the proceedings of the Dissenters in 1732, I have, I think, clearly shown, that the insinuations and assertions of the author under consideration, as to the agency and influence of the almoners of the Royal Bounty,

in stopping every movement for an appeal to Parliament, are not only unsupported by the shadow of evidence, but are in direct opposition to well known and fully authenticated historical facts *.

But, if our author is to be believed, this was not the only occasion on which the trustees of the *Regium Donum*, faithful, it would appear, to their unrighteous compact, successfully exerted their mighty influence to perpetuate the civil bondage and degradation of their fellow Dissenters. "The Ministers and Deputies who were truly independent," he writes, "continued to struggle for an application year after year, from 1732 to 1736, when they prevailed so far as to have a Bill brought into the House of Commons for the repeal of the above Acts. But as the Royal almoners, with their adherents, openly opposed it; Walpole pleaded the disunion of the Dissenters on the affair, and presently kicked it out."

The proceeding to which the writer here refers, with some inaccuracy, was the motion made by Mr. Plumer, the member for Hertfordshire, for leave to bring in a Bill to repeal the Corporation and Test Acts. As a detailed statement of what actually took place on this occasion has been printed in the History of the Proceedings of the Deputies, which may be taken as the highest authority in the case, I shall here submit the passage to the perusal of the reader, and beg his particular attention to the facts it relates.

"In the year 1735, soon after a general election,

* See note (A) at the end.

in which the Dissenters had used all their efforts on behalf of the existing Administration, which might be considered as the surest pledge that could be given of their attachment to the House of Hanover, a Committee was appointed again to consult Sir Robert Walpole on the subject; he returned for answer, 'That on account of the situation of public affairs, both foreign and domestic, His Majesty's servants were not of opinion that the time was then proper; but as the Dissenters had more than once deferred their application, in deference to the wishes of Ministers, and in the late elections had behaved so exceedingly well, they would leave it to them to make the attempt, if they saw fitting, the next sessions.' On this it was resolved to persist; the heads of a Bill were drawn, and measures taken to secure success. After many months exertion on the part of the Committee, the report was again unfavourable. They say, 'From the Administration, so far as we know their minds, we have not the least encouragement; but, on the contrary, must expect opposition from them. Those members of Parliament now out of power, tell us the attempt will be vain unless the Administration concur, and decline giving us the promise of their assistance.' 'Others,' say the Committee, 'though the number be small, declare their readiness to assist us in all events.' It was at length resolved, that an appeal to Parliament should be made; and accordingly, on the 12th of March, 1735-6, Mr. Plumer, the distinguished member for the county of Herts, moved for leave to bring in a Bill for repealing the Test and Corporation Acts. After a

debate of considerable length, in which he was supported by a number of gentlemen who were known friends to the Established Church, the question was lost by a majority of 281 to 132.

“ This defeat was not unexpected by the Committee. They say in a circular letter soon after it happened, that their friends in general, who were of the greatest weight and influence, dissuaded them from the attempt; but that the generality of the Dissenters being of a contrary opinion, they judged it necessary to make the experiment *.”

In this authentic account no traces, so far as I can see, are to be discovered of the interference, much less of the open opposition, of the “ Royal almoners,” who are ever haunting this writer’s imagination. The persons chiefly opposed to the application were, it seems, not a band of unprincipled Dissenting Ministers, unceasingly on the alert to do the dirty work of a profligate statesman, but certain members of Parliament then out of power, who told the Committee plainly the attempt were vain unless the Administration concurred; and the Administration would not vouchsafe them the least encouragement. They frankly inform the country in their circular after their defeat, that “ their friends in general, who were of the greatest weight and influence,” meaning, of course, their lay political friends, who from their station in society, and their connexion with Parliament, were of the utmost consequence to them as allies, dissuaded them from the

* Sketch of the History and Proceedings of the Deputies, &c. 8vo, 1813, pp. 3 & 4.

attempt, and that they made the application against their own sense of propriety, simply on the ground that the generality of the Dissenters were of a different opinion.

The lay gentlemen who devoted themselves with so much ability and zeal to procure the repeal of the Sacramental Test must be supposed to have been fully informed as to the nature and sources of the opposition which it was an important part of their duty to overcome. In their communications to the Dissenters throughout the country, reporting their proceedings in the execution of their trust, they occasionally specify particular kinds of impediments which obstructed their progress, and name certain classes of persons with whom they had again and again to contend. In no single instance, however, is there the slightest allusion to any evil influence, to any covert or open hostility to their plans, of the sort to which the anonymous author broadly and confidently ascribes their repeated discomfiture and defeat. Nowhere do they insinuate that they had to repel the secret or undisguised efforts of Dissenting ministers, thought to be systematically counteracting their proceedings at the suggestion or under the dictation of a Minister of State. In no part of their book, valuable for the fullness and the accuracy of the information it conveys, is there the most remote allusion to the Royal Bounty, or its Distributors as controlling in any way or measure the opinions or the conduct of some portion of the Dissenters upon the subject under their immediate consideration. Had such an adverse influence been known, or even suspected, to exist, it is not to be

believed that these gentlemen, who had every motive to be open and unreserved in their dealings with the public, and were anxious to discharge their duty in the most effective manner, would not, without hesitation, have denounced it for the reprobation of the country.

It is then, I confidently submit, sufficiently manifest, so far as relates to the periods specifically pointed out by our author, that the trustees of the *Regium Donum* did not discourage and oppose the application to Parliament for the repeal of the Sacramental Test. It is equally certain, that from the first year of their appointment they held a conspicuous place in the ranks of those who devoted their time and their talents to the honourable attempt to get rid of that "reproach to a Christian state."

After a long interval of comparative inactivity, the Deputies renewed their application to Parliament for the repeal of the Sacramental Test, in the years 1787, 1788, and 1790, under the auspices of senators of the highest character for the purity of their political principles and the splendour of their talents. If the trustees of the *Regium Donum* were, by the nature of their appointment, the constant and pledged opponents of every attempt to expunge from the Statute Book the Corporation and Test Acts, we might expect to discover indications of their agency on these important occasions. Had our anonymous author been living, his jaundiced vision would possibly have discerned some proof of their apostacy and subserviency in the failure of these strenuous and nobly conducted efforts of the friends of religious freedom. It so happens,

however, that those who must have been the first to suffer from their machinations, the conductors of the appeals to the legislature, never for an instant suspected that their failure was to be in any measure attributed to the countervailing agency of the minions of the Government, concealing their political character under the garb of ministers of religion. A difference of opinion did, indeed, at these several periods, exist among the Dissenters on the subject of the application to Parliament. But these differences were chiefly found among the dissenting laity. They were occasioned by sincere and not unreasonable doubts entertained by many persons warmly attached to the civil liberties of their brethren, as to the expediency of a public movement in the existing circumstances of the country. The Trustees of the *Regium Donum*, if any of them participated in these doubts, were not distinguished from other Dissenters in the avowal of them; and it is a fact easy of demonstration, that some of that maligned body were conspicuous for their zeal and activity in supporting the proceedings of the Deputies.

In the year 1827 was formed the United Committee of Dissenting Ministers and lay gentlemen, including the whole of the Committee of Deputies, which had the honour and gratification of carrying the great measure of relief, for which their predecessors had so long and so perseveringly struggled in vain. Another opportunity was now presented to the "Royal almoners," who had indeed acquired a new character in consequence of a change in the form of the *Regium Donum* into a

Parliamentary Grant, to display their fidelity to their alleged engagement to the existing Administration, to interpose between their fellow Dissenters and the restoration of their civil rights. There seemed, indeed, to be a special call upon them to renewed and vigorous exertion in their unrighteous avocation, because the application now so strongly enforced was known to be decidedly unpalatable to the Minister of the Crown. Vain, however, will be all attempts to discover traces of their adverse agency on this urgent occasion. If there were any truth in the alleged object of their original appointment, strange indeed must appear the conduct they now pursued. Out of the small number of Dissenting Ministers who were members of the United Committee, seven were Trustees of the Parliamentary Grant; and not only did they give no indication of a design to act counter to the wishes and determination of their zealous associates, but stood preeminently forward among the most ardent and active in promoting the common cause. It were invidious to assign special merit to individual members of a deputation so highly respectable, who acted with a fervour and unanimity worthy of their principles, and of the object they were associated to accomplish. To those, however, who witnessed the interior movements of the Committee, a privilege which it was my happiness to enjoy, it is well known that in the occasional subdivision of labour, Distributors of the Parliamentary Grant had, by the choice of their colleagues, to discharge some of the most honourable and important duties.

So far, then, as respects the subject of the repeal of

the Corporation and Test Acts, I have, I think, produced ample and demonstrative evidence, that all the insinuations and all the direct charges by which the anonymous writer in the London Magazine has attempted to criminate the Trustees of the *Regium Donum*, and, by fixing a stain upon their characters, to render that charitable fund hateful to the Dissenting public, are without the slightest foundation in truth.

Though the declared purpose of the *Regium Donum* was, according to this author, to operate as “*hush money*” to bribe the Dissenters to silence on the subject of the repeal of the Sacramental Test, the “Royal almoners” did not, he informs us, confine their unnatural opposition to their Dissenting brethren in their efforts to obtain the redress of this great grievance. They manifested equal zeal and activity, we are told, in the applications to the legislature in the years 1772 and 1773 for the enlargement of the Toleration Act, as it affected Dissenting Ministers, tutors, and schoolmasters.

A writer in the Times newspaper of May the 17th, 1828, under the signature of “Cephas*,” avowedly copying the account inserted in the London Magazine of 1774, asserts that, “in 1772, when the Dissenters were privately discussing the propriety of another application to Parliament for relief from their disabilities, the Distributors started off for the Treasury with the intelligence of the proposed measure, and finally defeated it.”

* A reply to this calumnious attack upon the *Regium Donum* and its Distributors appeared in the Times of the 28th of the same month, signed “Vindex;” the subject was not afterwards revived.

Justice to the original anonymous writer compels me to say, that his statement is not here correctly given, his copyist, in his eagerness to propagate his calumnies, having evidently mistaken his meaning. The professed object of the papers in the London Magazine was, to give an account of the Dissenters' application to Parliament for relief from the subscription to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England required by the Toleration Act. The writer, after quoting part of a circular letter written by the Rev. Mr. Pickard *, dated 27th of February, 1772, inviting the General Body of Ministers of the three denominations to meet at the Library in Redcross Street, to take the subject into consideration, adds, that the meeting was not

* London Magazine, 1774, pp. 433, *et seqq.* As some importance is attached to this letter, I shall here insert it entire.

"REV. SIR,—It is the opinion of some very worthy gentlemen, and hearty well-wishers to the Dissenting interest, that an application to Parliament to take off the subscription required of Protestant Dissenting Ministers by the Toleration Act, and to put tutors and schoolmasters upon a better footing than they now are, would be highly proper, and might probably be successful. Many of the Ministers think it their duty and of great importance to petition Parliament for that purpose. As they act herein upon the great principle common to all Protestant Dissenters, they hope for the unanimous concurrence of their brethren in the ministry in so interesting an affair. You are therefore desired, if you approve the design, to meet your brethren at the Library in Redcross Street, on Thursday the fifth day of March, at ten o'clock in the forenoon, to proceed to business exactly at eleven, to consider of the best means to pursue this great design, and to choose a committee for the purpose. I am, in the name of many of the brethren, Rev. Sir,

" Your affectionate, humble servant,

" Feb. 27, 1772."

" EDWARD PICKARD."

held at the time proposed, "because this letter alarmed such ministers as are commonly distinguished by their brethren with the honourable name of R. D. or *Regium Donum* men; and by their superior sagacity and address the Thursday meeting was set aside, the Royal almoners stole a day's march on their brethren, took possession of the camp, displayed in it the standard of power, and honoured and cast down whom they pleased." In a subsequent letter in the same Magazine, for the month of November, 1774, p. 549, he writes as follows: "We have traced the pernicious influence of the *Regium Donum* in former times. It will fully appear in the progress of this disgraceful history of the Dissenters' application to Parliament in 1772 and 1773. The almoners first made known the design to the Treasury, started for the Committee, and brought them to act under the auspices of two Lords of the Treasury, and cherished the Bill framed and clogged by their measures, and charmed all their friends to embrace it, though it deviated from the first proposed plan, opposed the first principles of Protestant Dissenters, established the imposition of human subscription by the magistrate on the ministers of religion, and breathed oppression towards many of their brethren, if in the least enforced. They must have supposed this must produce dissensions in the Body, and would thus once more furnish the courtiers with an argument to throw out the Bill solicited. They refused to seek relief on the common principle of liberty, which must equally conclude for the relief of all, without compliance with any religious test whatever; and at last

they voted to drop the solicitation of their own partial Bill when there was a prospect of success,—‘ *the last Session of a House of Commons.* ’ ”

It may not be possible at this distance of time fully to understand the allusions, and to refute all the insinuations and charges comprised in the preceding extracts. To those of principal weight it is, however, by no means difficult to give a satisfactory explanation and reply.

The anonymous author first imputes to the Distributors of the *Regium Donum* an aversion to this application to Parliament for relief, adding, as an aggravation of their delinquency, that when they found an application to be inevitable, they employed their influence to obtain the management of it, for the purpose, it must be presumed, of rendering it as little unpleasant as possible to their courtly patrons. They were “alarmed” by Mr. Pickard’s letter, caused the meeting to be held a day earlier than he had proposed, and then displayed there “the standard of power,” by controlling, as I suppose he would insinuate, the choice of the Committee to whom the direction of the affair was to be entrusted.

The fact is certain, that the meeting of the Body of Ministers which Mr. Pickard had *invited* them to hold on the *fifth* took place on the *fourth* of March; but why the time was changed it may now be impossible to discover. It is worthy notice, however, that according to the standing rules of the Body of Ministers, no extraordinary meeting could be held upon the personal invitation of Mr. Pickard, or any other individual member. He was not the

secretary ; and even if he had held that office, he could not legally summon the members without a formal requisition signed by a certain number of each denomination, or a vote of the standing General Committee. From the mention made by our author of this Committee, it is probable that the irregularity might have been pointed out to them, and that to remedy it they caused the Body to be summoned in the ordinary way. The day might have been altered after consultation to suit the convenience of the parties. But whatever may have been the real circumstances of the case, what possible advantage, I would ask, could the Distributors of the *Regium Donum* promise themselves, in their supposed hostility to the ulterior measure, by anticipating the discussion of it by so short an interval? Any "power" or influence they could have "displayed" on *Thursday*, they could, surely, with equal ease and effect, have exerted on the *Wednesday*, previous notice being equally given for both days, as to the time and object of the Ministers coming together.

The meeting of the General Body of Ministers of the three denominations thus held on the 4th of March, 1772, was the first public proceeding relative to this application to Parliament: on that occasion it was stated as the principal reason for the proposed measure, that "Intimation had been given that Administration appeared disposed to take off the subscription required of Protestant Dissenting Ministers by the Toleration Act, and to give relief in the case of tutors and schoolmasters." The Body immediately resolved, that "these were very

desirable and important objects," and appointed a Special Standing Committee "to concert and pursue such measures, and to make such applications as may be necessary to carry those purposes into effect."

At this meeting there were displayed, so far, at least, as appears from any existing record, no symptoms of "alarm" at the proposal, nor any indications of hostility to the application, in the conduct of the Distributors of the *Regium Donum*. The business seems to have been conducted with remarkable unanimity; for out of fifty Ministers who attended the discussion, only one held up his hand against the Resolution.

If the "standard of power" was "displayed" in the choice of the Ministers who were to constitute this important Committee, most persons who look at the names of the members will, I venture to say, rejoice at the use that was made of it, and commend the selection of so many eminent men to conduct an affair of such vital consequence to the Dissenters. The Committee consisted of Mr. Pickard (the chairman), Dr. Amory, Dr. Price, *Dr. Harris*, Dr. Kippis, *Mr. Pope*, Dr. Conder, *Dr. Gibbons*, Dr. Savage, Dr. Furneaux, *Mr. Toller*, Mr. Thompson, *Dr. Stennett*, Dr. Jeffries, and Mr. Wallin. Of these gentlemen, the five whose names are printed in Italics were at the time Distributors of the *Regium Donum*.

The Committee entered immediately upon their labours, and in about six weeks procured a Bill to be brought into the House of Commons. There is no evidence whatever of their proceedings being

obstructed or embarrassed by the "Royal almoners." From their private Minutes, which are now before me, it distinctly appears that they acted throughout with perfect cordiality and with united ardour and zeal. On the 17th of April, the chairman, Mr. Pickard, made a report to an extraordinary meeting of the General Body, in which, after specifying what they had done, he remarks, that "in every step they had acted with entire harmony, and had no other contention but who should do most to promote so good a cause."

It is further charged against the Distributors of the *Regium Donum*, that in this application to Parliament they acted under the auspices of the Ministers of the Crown; and having declined to seek relief on "the common principles of liberty," they brought forward a measure which "opposed the first principles of Protestant Dissenters."

If there was anything reprehensible in the mode of proceeding, or in the nature of the plan by which it was proposed to obtain the desired relief for the Dissenters, I must be permitted to say, that the Distributors were responsible for it only as individual members of the Committee. In point of number they formed a minority; and their associates comprised, as their names sufficiently indicate, Ministers of the highest reputation, and most extensive influence in their respective denominations. It were therefore absurd to suppose, that so many men, distinguished alike for their talents and independence of spirit, could by any arts be seduced or persuaded to adopt and advocate an important public measure, deeply affecting the interests of the

community to which they belonged, unless it had the approbation of their deliberate judgement.

But what were the ministerial "auspices" by which the Committee were seduced to depart from the straight and honourable course of duty? The first intimation of the probable success of an application for relief having come directly or indirectly from the Administration*, the Committee were bound, both by courtesy and policy, to consult them, in order to ascertain their views, and secure their cooperation and support. The "two Lords of the Treasury" were, probably, Lord North and the Honourable George Onslow, whose advice they solicited. Mr. Onslow "assured them of his hearty approbation, and disposition to promote their design, and that Lord North was in the same disposition." This gentleman undertook at first to bring in their Bill; but afterwards declined, for public reasons which he fully explained. He recommended the Committee to entrust it to Sir Henry Houghton, as better fitted, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, to be their advocate, pledging himself at the same time to give them all the assistance in his power, and to secure the support of Lord North. But while members of the Administration thus patronized the application, it is very

* "Receiving intelligence that some persons in the Government were now disposed to assist the Dissenters in this affair, they [the Committee] thought it their duty, in concurrence with other of their brethren, and by the advice of some friends, to improve this favourable disposition, and to apply without loss of time."—*Mr. Pickard's first official circular letter, as Chairman of the Committee, addressed to the Dissenting Ministers in the country, and dated June 3rd, 1772,—a folio sheet.*

possible they might have stated the extent to which their aid and concurrence was to be expected; still, however, they left the Committee to take their own course as to the kind of Bill they might think it proper to introduce*.

What, then, was the conduct of the Committee in the discharge of this part of their official duty? According to our author, they brought forward a measure which "opposed the first principles of Dissent, established the imposition of human subscription," and "refused to seek relief on the common principles of liberty." These grave imputations, however positively advanced, are fully refuted by the history of the proceedings. From the Minutes of the Committee, it clearly appears that they commenced their labours wholly unshackled by any dictation or influence from without. Their first and united efforts were directed to procure in the fullest manner relief from the required subscription to the articles of the Church of England; without the substitution of any new subscription, or any other test whatsoever. They soon found, however, as they state in their first report to the General Body, on the 17th of April, 1772, "that without a declaration of their Christianity their Bill would not be admitted into the House of Commons."

* The Bill was first drawn up by the Committee, and placed in the hands of Mr. Onslow. Afterwards it was submitted to the revision of an eminent barrister, Michael Dodson, Esq., and adopted with his alterations. The following is the private Minute of the Committee, dated 4th April, 1772: "Michael Dodson, Esq., having met the Committee, at their request, and laid before them the intended Bill with amendments, the same was, after examination, unanimously approved."

This obstacle was interposed by the Bishops, who informed them, through Mr. Onslow, that "they thought some test of their belief of the doctrines of Christianity was necessary." The Committee proceeded to observe, through their chairman, that "with as much deliberation as the time would permit," they proposed a Declaration, "which they persuaded themselves was acceptable to their brethren, as it was a *virtual renunciation of human authority in matters of faith*, and an asserting of their grand common principle, the sufficiency of Scripture, and the right of private judgement." The only alternative left to the Committee in this stage of the business, was, either to consent to introduce into their Bill some general Declaration of belief in the Scriptures, or to abandon the measure altogether, leaving themselves and their brethren, under the compulsory requisition of the Toleration Act, to subscribe the doctrinal articles of the Established Church, and exposed to all the heavy penalties by which that subscription was enforced. They chose the former course; and, in my judgement, they exercised a sound discretion *.

* The Declaration introduced in the first Bill was as follows :

"We declare, as in the presence of Almighty God, that we believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the mind and will of God; and that we receive them as the rule of our faith and practice."—See *Dr. Kippis's Vindication of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers, with regard to the late application to Parliament*, first edit. 1772, p. 54; second edit. 1773, p. 60.

The Committee, it appears from their Minutes, found great difficulty in settling the form of the Declaration. In proposing the second Bill, brought forward in 1773, it was at one time intended to introduce the following form, prepared by Dr. Price: "I

The Committee brought in their Bill on the 3rd of April, 1772, and it passed the House of Commons on Tuesday the 5th of May, in the same year. On the 19th of the same month it was read a second time in the House of Lords, and on a division was lost, twenty-seven peers voting for it, and one hundred and two against it. The Committee renewed their application in the following year, with the same success in the one, and a similar defeat in the other House of Parliament. After this, looking to all the circumstances of the case, and the nature of the opposition they had to encounter, especially from the Bishops, all of whom took a determined and vigorous part against them; and seeing, as they thought, no prospect at that time of a different result to a third attempt, they recommended to the General Body to refrain from another application till some change might open to them a fairer prospect of success. In a circular letter now before me, ad-

A. B., declare, as in the presence of Almighty God, that I am a Christian, and a Protestant Dissenting Minister, and that, as such, I acknowledge Jesus Christ to be my only Lord and Master in religion; and receive the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as containing a revelation of the mind and will of God, and the rule of my faith and practice." This was afterwards altered. Mr. Pickard, in his printed circular of Feb. 5, 1773, (folio sheet,) reporting to the country Ministers the intentions of the Committee, writes as follows:

"The Bill is now so framed as to leave the alternative; that is, a liberty to subscribe the Articles of the Church of England, as required by the Act of Toleration, or the Declaration now proposed: this is, "I, A. B., do declare, as in the presence of Almighty God, that I am a Christian and a Protestant; and that, as such, I do receive the revelation of the will of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the rule of my faith and practice."

dressed to the Dissenters in the country, dated the 31st of March, 1779, and signed "Edward Pickard," containing a statement of the reasons which had induced the Committee to decline renewing their application that session, they say: "It is not from an abatement of their zeal for the great object of the application that they are for postponing it, but from the strongest conviction of their judgement, founded on what they think sufficient evidence, that the renewal of it this session would greatly injure, if not ruin, the cause; and that the postponement of it will greatly promote its success upon a future application."

Supposing then for an instant, in the absence of all proof, the assertion of the writer in the London Magazine to be well founded, and that the movements and determinations of the Committee were under the absolute direction of the *Regium Donum* Distributors, it will not, I humbly submit, be imputed to them, by impartial and competent judges, as a very grave offence, that "they dropped the solicitation of their own Bill" at the moment they did, when the reasons on which they rest the justification of their conduct are fully and dispassionately considered.

But their accuser confidently alleges that they might then have succeeded, because that was "the last session of a House of Commons." This gentleman has not, however, condescended to explain of what possible avail this circumstance could have been to the petitioners had they then renewed their application. It seems to have escaped his recollection, that the chief impediments which the Com-

mittee had to surmount were not found in the Lower House of Parliament, where their Bill had been twice carried by triumphant majorities. Their main difficulty lay in subduing the hostility of the Lords; and grievous and criminal as it might appear to their inexorable judge, they certainly had not the extraordinary penetration to discover by what magic power the dissolution of a House of Commons, the dreaded consummation which alone could be supposed to impart such happy efficacy to "a last session," was to change the convictions of the hereditary legislators; and the more especially to remove the scruples and tranquillize the consciences of their lordships the Bishops, who deemed the honour of their order, and the stability of their church, compromised or endangered by the supplicated concession to the Dissenting clergy, which they had so manfully and successfully resisted.

Though the subject was frequently brought under the consideration of the General Body of Ministers, no further application was made to Parliament for relief from subscription till the year 1779, when an Act was obtained that accomplished the great object for which, through their Committee, they had so strenuously laboured. In this Act, however, a Declaration, similar to that before proposed, was forced upon them against all their efforts to obtain the important boon without so unnecessary and offensive an incumbrance*.

* The Act is entitled, "An Act for the further relief of Protestant Dissenting Ministers and Schoolmasters." (19th Geo. III. cap. xlv.) The Declaration contained in this Act is as follows: "I, A. B., do solemnly declare, in the presence of Almighty God,

In the review of these proceedings, the whole of which I have examined with great care from the original Minutes of the Committee, and other manuscript records ; from the printed circular letters of the chairman of the Committee reporting the steps which were taken by them from time to time ; and also from the pamphlets to which the application gave rise ;—I can discover in no part of them any grounds whatever for imputing to the Distributors of the *Regium Donum* an aversion to the application for relief, nor any attempt to direct and control the acts of the General Body of Ministers or their Committee, so as to make them subserve any sinister purpose of their own, detrimental to the interests of the Dissenters. Those of the Distributors who were members of the Committee, were men of high character and known friends of religious liberty ;

that I am a Christian and a Protestant ; and as such, that I believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as commonly received among Protestant Churches, do contain the revealed will of God ; and that I do receive the same as the rule of my doctrine and practice." This Declaration was carried in the House of Commons in a Committee of the whole House, on the 20th of April, 1779, after a debate of five hours, the numbers on division, being, 88 for, and 58 against it. The chief speakers against it were Sir Henry Houghton, Mr. Wilkes, Mr. Fox, Mr. Dunning, Mr. Serjeant Adair, and Lord John Cavendish ; and for it, Lord North and Mr. Burke.

The Committee who conducted this last application to Parliament were, Dr. Kippis, chairman ; *Dr. Harris, Mr. Pope, Dr. Price, Dr. Flexman, Dr. Rees, Dr. Gibbons, Mr. Toller, Mr. James Webb, Mr. Hill, Mr. Jennings, Dr. Stennett, Dr. Jeffries, Mr. Thompson, Mr. Wallin.*

Those printed in Italics were, at the time, Distributors of the *Regium Donum* : at a later period, Dr. Kippis and Mr. Jennings were also chosen Distributors.

and their whole conduct evinces that they spared no pains to assist their reverend associates in the prosecution of the great object they were appointed to secure.

The Committee had, indeed, at every step of their progress, to encounter great and embarrassing opposition. There were in London some Protestant Dissenting Ministers who were decidedly averse to the application made to Parliament by the General Body, because, as they allege, they were "well satisfied with the present mode of qualification, prescribed in the Act of Toleration, from a full conviction in their own consciences, that the articles of the Church of England, as now by law established, are contained in the Holy Scriptures*."

There were in the General Body itself some ministers who seemed to concur in the sentiments of the gentlemen who issued this extraordinary declaration. They were of opinion that the application originated in a "dislike to the doctrinal articles of the Church of England:" and being "neither afraid nor ashamed to declare that they believed the doctrines of the articles to be both true and important, they durst not consent to be held up to view as those who indulged any doubts respecting their truth, or at all hesitated as to their importance †."

* See a paper headed, "Society of Protestant Dissenting Ministers, meeting at the New York Coffee-house, Sweeting's Alley, Cornhill, London;" (folio sheet) dated January the 29th, 1773, and signed Richard Hutchings, *Chairman*; John Langford, *Secretary*.

† See a paper entitled, "Reasons offered by thirteen Dissenting Ministers against the present Application to Parliament."

In the General Body were, besides, some zealous friends of religious freedom, who would be satisfied with no measure of relief encumbered with any test or condition whatever, and who, in their speeches and from the press, denounced the Bill of the Committee as unfit to be entertained and supported by the Dissenters, on account of the Declaration which had been admitted into it for the purpose of disarming the hostility, and conciliating the patronage, of certain influential members of the legislature. These were high-minded adversaries, against whom the Committee, who held the same broad principles of liberty, could only urge in their justification the necessity by which they unfortunately found themselves constrained, either to consent to the introduction of the offensive qualification, or to abandon a measure which was essential to the personal security and comfort of hundreds of worthy Ministers.

The Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Pickard, in a Report delivered to the General Body on the 10th of June, 1772, alluding to several methods which had been pursued in order to obstruct and defeat the application, spoke as follows :

“ Secret, clandestine representations have been made ; if I called them misrepresentations, I should be justified. I speak upon authority, as to the things themselves, though the names of those concerned have been endeavoured to be concealed. This method was early taken ; for, upon the first taking up of this design, it was insinuated that it was only by some young men among us, who were scarcely Christians. The triumph upon this was but short,

The Committee brought in their Bill on the 3rd of April, 1772, and it passed the House of Commons on Tuesday the 5th of May, in the same year. On the 19th of the same month it was read a second time in the House of Lords, and on a division was lost, twenty-seven peers voting for it, and one hundred and two against it. The Committee renewed their application in the following year, with the same success in the one, and a similar defeat in the other House of Parliament. After this, looking to all the circumstances of the case, and the nature of the opposition they had to encounter, especially from the Bishops, all of whom took a determined and vigorous part against them; and seeing, as they thought, no prospect at that time of a different result to a third attempt, they recommended to the General Body to refrain from another application till some change might open to them a fairer prospect of success. In a circular letter now before me, ad-

A. B., declare, as in the presence of Almighty God, that I am a Christian, and a Protestant Dissenting Minister, and that, as such, I acknowledge Jesus Christ to be my only Lord and Master in religion; and receive the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as containing a revelation of the mind and will of God, and the rule of my faith and practice." This was afterwards altered. Mr. Pickard, in his printed circular of Feb. 5, 1773, (folio sheet,) reporting to the country Ministers the intentions of the Committee, writes as follows:

"The Bill is now so framed as to leave the alternative; that is, a liberty to subscribe the Articles of the Church of England, as required by the Act of Toleration, or the Declaration now proposed: this is, "I, A. B., do declare, as in the presence of Almighty God, that I am a Christian and a Protestant; and that, as such, I do receive the revelation of the will of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the rule of my faith and practice."

community to which they belonged, unless it had the approbation of their deliberate judgement.

But what were the ministerial "auspices" by which the Committee were seduced to depart from the straight and honourable course of duty? The first intimation of the probable success of an application for relief having come directly or indirectly from the Administration*, the Committee were bound, both by courtesy and policy, to consult them, in order to ascertain their views, and secure their cooperation and support. The "two Lords of the Treasury" were, probably, Lord North and the Honourable George Onslow, whose advice they solicited. Mr. Onslow "assured them of his hearty approbation, and disposition to promote their design, and that Lord North was in the same disposition." This gentleman undertook at first to bring in their Bill; but afterwards declined, for public reasons which he fully explained. He recommended the Committee to entrust it to Sir Henry Houghton, as better fitted, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, to be their advocate, pledging himself at the same time to give them all the assistance in his power, and to secure the support of Lord North. But while members of the Administration thus patronized the application, it is very

* "Receiving intelligence *that some persons in the Government were now disposed to assist the Dissenters in this affair*, they [the Committee] thought it their duty, in concurrence with other of their brethren, and by the advice of some friends, to improve this favourable disposition, and to apply without loss of time."—*Mr. Pickard's first official circular letter, as Chairman of the Committee, addressed to the Dissenting Ministers in the country, and dated June 3rd, 1772*,—a folio sheet.

Mr. George Dyer, in making some extracts from these papers in his *Memoirs of Mr. Robert Robinson*, remarks in a note (page 237): "The writer, as I am informed by a respectable Dissenting Minister, John Armstrong, was the learned Dr. Mayo." A similar statement is made by Mr. Rutt, in a note in the *Memoirs of the Life and Times of Dr. Edmund Calamy*. Dr. Mayo was in 1772, and for several years afterwards, a member of the General Body of London Dissenting Ministers, and throughout the whole of the proceedings in the application to Parliament for the enlargement of the Toleration Act, was their uniform and strenuous opponent.

The Chairman of the Committee, in his Report quoted above, refers with marked emphasis to the expunging of a certain entry in the Minutes of the General Body. The history of this affair is not a little curious. On the 14th of April 1772, Dr. Mayo was appointed the Secretary of the General Body of Ministers. On the 17th of the same month Mr. Pickard made a Report from the Committee of "the steps they had taken to carry into execution the purpose for which they were chosen;" the delivery of which Report was recorded in the Minute-book by Dr. Mayo. Immediately after was entered, in the same handwriting, a minute of a resolution of "thanks to the Committee for their care and diligence," which the writer represented as being carried with considerable opposition. On the 12th of May ensuing (1772), Dr. Mayo, it is said, significantly, "RESIGNED" the office of Secretary, the Minute alluded to was ordered to be EXPUNGED as a false record, and thanks were again voted in due

This obstacle was interposed by the Bishops, who informed them, through Mr. Onslow, that "they thought some test of their belief of the doctrines of Christianity was necessary." The Committee proceeded to observe, through their chairman, that "with as much deliberation as the time would permit," they proposed a Declaration, "which they persuaded themselves was acceptable to their brethren, as it was a *virtual renunciation of human authority in matters of faith*, and an asserting of their grand common principle, the sufficiency of Scripture, and the right of private judgement." The only alternative left to the Committee in this stage of the business, was, either to consent to introduce into their Bill some general Declaration of belief in the Scriptures, or to abandon the measure altogether, leaving themselves and their brethren, under the compulsory requisition of the Toleration Act, to subscribe the doctrinal articles of the Established Church, and exposed to all the heavy penalties by which that subscription was enforced. They chose the former course; and, in my judgement, they exercised a sound discretion *.

* The Declaration introduced in the first Bill was as follows :

"We declare, as in the presence of Almighty God, that we believe that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation of the mind and will of God; and that we receive them as the rule of our faith and practice."—See *Dr. Kippis's Vindication of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers, with regard to the late application to Parliament*, first edit. 1772, p. 54; second edit. 1773, p. 60.

The Committee, it appears from their Minutes, found great difficulty in settling the form of the Declaration. In proposing the second Bill, brought forward in 1773, it was at one time intended to introduce the following form, prepared by Dr. Price: "I

The Committee brought in their Bill on the 3rd of April, 1772, and it passed the House of Commons on Tuesday the 5th of May, in the same year. On the 19th of the same month it was read a second time in the House of Lords, and on a division was lost, twenty-seven peers voting for it, and one hundred and two against it. The Committee renewed their application in the following year, with the same success in the one, and a similar defeat in the other House of Parliament. After this, looking to all the circumstances of the case, and the nature of the opposition they had to encounter, especially from the Bishops, all of whom took a determined and vigorous part against them; and seeing, as they thought, no prospect at that time of a different result to a third attempt, they recommended to the General Body to refrain from another application till some change might open to them a fairer prospect of success. In a circular letter now before me, ad-

A. B., declare, as in the presence of Almighty God, that I am a Christian, and a Protestant Dissenting Minister, and that, as such, I acknowledge Jesus Christ to be my only Lord and Master in religion; and receive the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as containing a revelation of the mind and will of God, and the rule of my faith and practice." This was afterwards altered. Mr. Pickard, in his printed circular of Feb. 5, 1773, (folio sheet,) reporting to the country Ministers the intentions of the Committee, writes as follows:

"The Bill is now so framed as to leave the alternative; that is, a liberty to subscribe the Articles of the Church of England, as required by the Act of Toleration, or the Declaration now proposed: this is, "I, A. B., do declare, as in the presence of Almighty God, that I am a Christian and a Protestant; and that, as such, I do receive the revelation of the will of God, contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, as the rule of my faith and practice."

facts ; and to treat his harsh censures with unqualified scorn and indignation as the baseless slanders of prejudice and malignity.

Subsequently to the applications to Parliament which have been already mentioned, the attention of the General Body of Ministers in London has been several times directed to the consideration of the restraints imposed by the existing laws upon the religious freedom of themselves and other classes of British subjects ; and they have repeatedly appeared before the public and the legislature as the assertors of the right of all persons to equal and absolute liberty in matters affecting their religious convictions, and to equal privileges as citizens of the state. Whilst the Roman Catholics were pleading for the removal of the civil disabilities so long unjustly attached to their religious profession, the Body of Ministers openly espoused their cause, and petitioned Parliament for the redress of their grievances. In pursuance of the same great object, and as the most effectual method of silencing all complaints of the interference of the Magistrate with the dictates of conscience, they addressed to the legislature a Petition for the immediate repeal of all the penal statutes, which imposed restraints upon religious profession and worship, and made men amenable to human tribunals for the avowal and defence of their theological opinions.

In the liberal spirit and Christian zeal which prompted these measures and carried them into execution, the Trustees of the Royal Bounty, or Parliamentary Grant, largely participated. On some of the occasions they took the lead in originating

and conducting the proceedings, and upon all of them they were found in the ranks of their warmest advocates and supporters.

If the account given by the writer in the London Magazine were correct, the Trustees of this Bounty, whether Royal or Parliamentary, must always appear as the friends and champions of every existing Administration, their appointment implying absolute political subserviency, and the honour and influence supposed to be attached to their office being dependent upon the pleasure of the Minister of the Crown, who might be expected to exact unqualified support. But I fearlessly ask, does their history evince that they have shown themselves such slavish worshipers of "the powers that be"? No imputation can be more unwarranted and false. Upon questions of state policy which have divided the opinions of the nation, they have, no doubt, sometimes, in the free exercise of their individual judgement, differed in their sentiments from other persons, and perhaps from one another. And it may have happened that in some instances they approved of Government measures, which were unpalatable to other Dissenters. But in these cases, if any of the kind there really were,—I have met with no evidence of their existence,—their differences were only such as they entertained in common with others of their fellow-subjects, and ought not to be rashly imputed to them as a crime. It were no difficult task to show, that as citizens of the state they have acted with as much integrity, consistency, and independence, as any other body of men that can be named; and that upon occa-

community to which they belonged, unless it had the approbation of their deliberate judgement.

But what were the ministerial "auspices" by which the Committee were seduced to depart from the straight and honourable course of duty? The first intimation of the probable success of an application for relief having come directly or indirectly from the Administration*, the Committee were bound, both by courtesy and policy, to consult them, in order to ascertain their views, and secure their cooperation and support. The "two Lords of the Treasury" were, probably, Lord North and the Honourable George Onslow, whose advice they solicited. Mr. Onslow "assured them of his hearty approbation, and disposition to promote their design, and that Lord North was in the same disposition." This gentleman undertook at first to bring in their Bill; but afterwards declined, for public reasons which he fully explained. He recommended the Committee to entrust it to Sir Henry Houghton, as better fitted, under the peculiar circumstances of the case, to be their advocate, pledging himself at the same time to give them all the assistance in his power, and to secure the support of Lord North. But while members of the Administration thus patronized the application, it is very

* "Receiving intelligence *that some persons in the Government were now disposed to assist the Dissenters in this affair*, they [the Committee] thought it their duty, in concurrence with other of their brethren, and by the advice of some friends, to improve this favourable disposition, and to apply without loss of time."—*Mr. Pickard's first official circular letter, as Chairman of the Committee, addressed to the Dissenting Ministers in the* *dated June 3rd, 1772,—a folio sheet.*

possible they might have stated the extent to which their aid and concurrence was to be expected; still, however, they left the Committee to take their own course as to the kind of Bill they might think it proper to introduce*.

What, then, was the conduct of the Committee in the discharge of this part of their official duty? According to our author, they brought forward a measure which “opposed the first principles of Dissent, established the imposition of human subscription,” and “refused to seek relief on the common principles of liberty.” These grave imputations, however positively advanced, are fully refuted by the history of the proceedings. From the Minutes of the Committee, it clearly appears that they commenced their labours wholly unshackled by any dictation or influence from without. Their first and united efforts were directed to procure in the fullest manner relief from the required subscription to the articles of the Church of England; without the substitution of any new subscription, or any other test whatsoever. They soon found, however, as they state in their first report to the General Body, on the 17th of April, 1772, “that without a declaration of their Christianity their Bill would not be admitted into the House of Commons.”

* The Bill was first drawn up by the Committee, and placed in the hands of Mr. Onslow. Afterwards it was submitted to the revision of an eminent barrister, Michael Dodson, Esq., and adopted with his alterations. The following is the private Minute of the Committee, dated 4th April, 1772: “Michael Dodson, Esq., having met the Committee, at their request, and laid before them the intended Bill with amendments, the same was, after examination, unanimously approved.”

ment to be the minions of the Government, were guilty of the grossest violation of their unprincipled engagement.

The conduct of individual members of the Trust through the whole of these periods was open and undisguised, and must have been well known at the Treasury. And yet there is no evidence to show that the course they were pursuing formed the subject of complaint at head-quarters, as being treacherous and undutiful. As independent and honourable men, they were left to the free exercise of their judgement and discretion in the formation and display of their opinions upon all matters of general or temporary politics which might happen to engage the public mind.

The facts which have been stated may suffice to prove, that the Distributors of the *Regium Donum* have never thought themselves under obligation, from their official character, to consult the pleasure of the Minister of the Crown in reference to their political principles and conduct. The whole combine to demonstrate that politics have had no necessary connexion with their functions, and have in no instance had the remotest influence in procuring their appointment. Dr. Calamy gives no intimation that Sir Robert Walpole, anxious as he has been represented to be to secure the silence of the Dissenters on the subject of their religious and civil grievances, took any part in the choice of the first "almoners." Nor was any provision made by the crafty Minister to secure a preponderating, or indeed any, influence in the appointment of new Trustees, when the old were removed by death or

other causes. The choice was left altogether to the discretion of the surviving Trustees, who filled up the vacancies at their own pleasure. The same course has been pursued in the successive appointments down to the present time. I must except, however, from this mode of election, the choice of the Trustee whose name is inserted in the Treasury warrant, who is considered to be most directly responsible for the due appropriation of the money. His appointment to this Trust rests necessarily with the Minister for the time being. But in the selection of this person, the King's Government has almost always been guided by the recommendation of the other Trustees.

It may possibly be objected, as an apparent contradiction of this account, that one Trustee, at least, of the *Regium Donum*, who procured the insertion of his name in the Treasury warrant, received his appointment in consequence of his known attachment to the political principles of the Prime Minister. I must admit that such an exception does certainly exist in the choice of the Rev. John Martin, a Baptist Minister of some, though not very honourable, notoriety, who, in the earlier stages of the French Revolution, became a convert to high Tory and Anti-jacobin principles, and, inflamed by the intoxicating zeal of a recent proselyte, publicly arraigned the Protestant Dissenters of England as the political enemies of the state. This gentleman having deemed it proper to publish the history of his own case, I shall do him the justice to allow him to speak here for himself.

"After Dr. Stennett's decease," he writes*, "I wished to be his successor to Ministers of my own denomination. To obtain that honour I applied to Mr. Pitt, who was then First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer. The learned gentlemen by whom I applied to him for that favour were well known to Mr. Pitt, and were gentlemen who had approved of my political sentiments on a trying occasion. I now refer to my intended speech on the Test Act, in the year 1789. Had I been permitted to deliver the substance of that speech at the Library, probably it would not have been printed; and if it had not been printed, perhaps no part of the *Regium Donum* would have been committed to my trust.

"Dr. Stennett died August 29, 1795, and by attempting to be his successor, I was surrounded with oppositions.

"The arguments of the gentlemen who opposed me were so specious and earnest, that I did not receive my first warrant till February 1797.

"Before it was in my possession, I was desired to write a letter of thanks to Mr. Pitt, and to inform him in what manner I intended to dispose of the money. I did so, and had the pleasure to hear from the Archbishop of Canterbury that Mr. Pitt spoke of this letter in terms of approbation."

Had similarity of views on the great political

* See "A Letter concerning the *Regium Donum*, addressed to those Ministers to whom His Majesty's Bounty has been distributed since the death of Dr. Stennett." By John Martin. 8vo, London 1806, pp. 7, &c.

questions which were then dividing the opinions of the nation, together with a convenient pliancy of disposition to follow with obsequious submission the instructions or commands of the "powers that be," been requisite qualifications for the office to which this gentleman aspired, here was a candidate, certainly, who had shown himself to be possessed of these important recommendations in a superlative degree. And it might reasonably be expected that with such peculiar fitness he would at once be installed in the post of honour. Strange to say, however, even Mr. Pitt, with all his instinctive dread of the democratic and revolutionary principles then commonly ascribed to the Dissenters, and attaching, as he did, supreme importance to the political creed to which the reverend suppliant for office had become a thorough and zealous convert, demurred, it seems, to secure the valuable services of this enlightened and high-minded divine by placing his name in the Treasury warrant. And so sensible was he that there was something irregular and unusual in the circumstances of the application, that, according to Mr. Martin's own confession, humiliating though it must have been to a gentleman upon such excellent terms with himself, he took from August 1795 to February 1797, to make up his mind to assent to the appointment. After all, too, Mr. Pitt, with a proper regard to his own responsibility as the Minister of the Crown, required to be informed by Mr. Martin, before he would allow the warrant to be issued from the Treasury, "in what manner he intended to dispose of the money."

But what, in these novel circumstances, was the conduct pursued by the old Trustees, the associates of Dr. Stennett? Did they submissively acquiesce in the mode now, for the first time, adopted to obtain the appointment on political considerations, and, with the consciousness that they were themselves virtually or actually the hirelings of the Minister of the day, greet with the salutations of a cordial welcome to their brotherhood the ultra-loyal associate chosen for them by their master? Mr. Martin's letter shall furnish the answer. After stating that he had failed to engage as colleagues two worthy gentlemen to whom he had applied for the purpose, (Mr. Urwick and Mr. Barber,) he writes as follows: (page 10.)

"In February, 1798, a paper with this title was sent to Lambeth, 'General Remarks relative to the Royal Bounty, to the Protestant Dissenting Clergy.' In that paper, if it yet exists, are these words: '*If Mr. Martin be continued, the former Trustees, how much soever they may wish to relieve the cases that lie before them, must decline to act with him, and acquiesce in surrendering a Trust which they and their predecessors have held, under the favour of His present Majesty, and that of his royal grandfather, with very little interruption, for more than 70 years.*'"

This was no idle threat, the momentary ebullition of anger or disappointment. Mortifying as it might be supposed to relinquish the sweets of office so long enjoyed, the Trustees kept their word; and in consequence of their peremptory refusal to act with him, Mr. Martin remained the *sole Distributor* till

1806. On the accession of the Whigs in that year, representations were made to Lord Grenville of the irregular and unprecedented mode of Mr. Martin's introduction to the office. He was in consequence "informed in August 1806, by proper authority, that Dr. Abraham Rees was appointed to be his successor." (Letter, &c. p. 15.)

I shall only remark upon this curious history, that the unanimous conduct of the Trustees in declining every solicitation to act with a colleague who had by such reprehensible means been introduced to the patronage of the Prime Minister, clearly evinces the full persuasion of their honourable minds that there was, and ought to be, no connexion whatever between the charitable fund so long under their management, and the passing politics of the day.

The only other instance I have been able to discover of the interference of the King's Minister with the management of this Trust, occurred in the time of Lord North. In this case the vacancy to be filled was occasioned by the death of one of the associated Trustees, whom I designate by this term to distinguish them from the Trustee named in the Treasury warrant. The circumstance is thus mentioned in Mr. Martin's letter already quoted, (p. 11.)

"About the year 1776, a Trustee was named by Lord North; but when he was told that such interference was unusual, *he gave up the gentleman, and apologized to the Trustees for interfering.*"

One or two cases have occurred within my own knowledge, in which attempts were contemplated

or made to induce the Minister of the Crown to exert the influence of his office in the appointment of a Trustee, or the appropriation of a part of the fund. The attempts, however, I am able to say, originated in the misapprehension of the parties as to the manner in which the business of this Trust had been conducted. In the one case, Lord Bexley, whilst Chancellor of the Exchequer, transmitted in the most courteous manner, to my late venerable friend Dr. Rees, an application that had been made to him to procure for his correspondent a part of the Parliamentary Grant, stating, at the same time, his determination not to interfere in a matter which was under proper management.

In the other, it was rumoured that on the death of Dr. Rees a Noble Lord, not then in office, volunteered to a respectable Dissenting Minister, since deceased, to use his influence with the Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington, to obtain for him the vacant office. Whether the patronage of His Grace was actually solicited on this occasion, I have had no means of ascertaining. But certain it is that the matter proceeded no further. The vacancy was filled by the choice and recommendation of the surviving Trustees.

Although the Distributors of the Royal Bounty were thus chosen with an entire disregard of political considerations, and, with the sole exception of the Trustee whose name appeared in the Treasury warrant, were successively self-elected, it must not be concluded that they were irresponsible officers, subject to no control. It has, indeed, been stated by the writer in the London Magazine that the form

of the warrant was, " without being accountable to His Majesty's Treasury." I can state, however, that even whilst the Grant was strictly a *Regium Donum*, paid from the privy purse, the Distributors were held accountable to the Government for the application of the money. And since the Grant has assumed the form of a Royal gift sanctioned and adopted by Parliament, they are still amenable to the Lords of the Treasury for the appropriation of every shilling placed at their disposal: for this reason their payments are audited at stated periods, and their accounts and vouchers are always kept in readiness to be produced whenever called for by the proper authorities.

From the preceding statements, as they relate to the principles and conduct of the Trustees of the *Regium Donum*, I persuade myself it has been made to appear, to the satisfaction of every candid reader, that the attempts to asperse and degrade their characters by holding them forth as men capable of being bribed, by this act of Royal beneficence, to become apostates from their profession as Dissenters, and as having actually sold themselves to be the tools of the King's Minister in the prosecution of his political schemes, have utterly and miserably failed. The cases ostentatiously brought forward as furnishing the proofs of their delinquency have been shown to furnish no matter for crimination or censure; whilst facts have been adduced, substantiated by contemporary and irrefragable authority, which fully demonstrate, that on every occasion when the great questions affecting the religious liberties of the Dissenters have been publicly agitated, they have been among the

first to advocate the righteous cause, and in the noble struggle have uniformly acted an independent and honourable part.

It remains to inquire, whether the Royal Bounty were not a "filthy bribe," as it was intended to operate upon the persons for whose special relief it was designed?

There can, surely, be no necessity to answer this question so far as it relates to those who are expressly named as the first beneficiaries, and the only persons, I wish the reader to bear in mind, contemplated in the original Grant. These were the poor widows of Dissenting Ministers. The stated and the sole purpose for which the money was placed in the hands of the Distributors being the relief of certain destitute women, it were ridiculous to imagine that the notion of bribing the recipients could have entered the thoughts of the King or his Ministers when they acceded to the benevolent solicitation of Mr. Burgess.

But the Grant was afterwards extended to relieve poor Dissenting Ministers; and then, it is assumed, it acquired the character of "hush money" and a "filthy bribe." Can it be requisite to appeal against this harsh and calumnious imputation to the knowledge of the accusers themselves, of the principles and character of that race of men whom they would thus wantonly consign to public hatred and contempt? Will any person, whose acquaintance with the history of the Dissenting clergy in the time of George the First qualifies him to be a competent judge, pledge his credit to the allegation that there was anything in their known habits and charac-

ter to warrant the suspicion that their integrity was a purchasable commodity, and to furnish either the King's Minister or his agents the Distributors with the slightest ground to hope that it would be bartered to them for any price they had to offer? Will it be maintained that their poverty had depraved their moral sense, annihilated their self-esteem, and rendered them reckless of the good opinion of their fellow-men, to say nothing of the judgement and retribution of the great Searcher of hearts? Had any Minister of State or Almoner of the Royal Bounty degraded himself so far beneath the dignity of his office, as to hold out to the acceptance of these men the pecuniary assistance so much needed to supply the pressing wants of their families, on condition of subserviency to their political schemes, the poorest man amongst them would have spurned the treacherous gift with indignation, and addressed to the base tempter the ancient apostolic malediction, "Thy money perish with thee!"

They who trifle, with such cruel sport, with the characters of these worthy men, forget, in their blind and perverse zeal, the main cause of the poverty and sufferings which rendered them fit objects of Royal beneficence. Need they be reminded that they were confessors for conscience sake, voluntarily enduring the severest privations rather than conform to a system of worship which they could not bring their minds to approve? If their principles had so feeble a hold of their understandings and their hearts that a bribe could sever it, is it not natural to ask, why they chose to continue Dissenters,

exposed to the evils of indigence? why not laugh their consciences to scorn, and return to the fostering bosom of the national Church, where competence or even wealth might be their portion?

But supposing it were admitted that poverty had wrought such strange effects upon these men, is it not likely that, degraded as they were, they would calculate the probable gain which was to reward their apostacy? And what, I would ask, was the proffered boon placed by the King's Minister at the disposal of the "Royal Almoners" to purchase their subserviency? The answer is, The sums of five, or three, or two pounds, once in the year, or in eighteen months or two years, according to the number and the exigencies of the demands upon them. The political services of men who estimated their integrity at so low a price, would hardly have been deemed worth the purchase at any cost. To reason, however, on this case is a waste of words. The moral baseness and political subserviency imputed to them as a class, is a gratuitous and malignant calumny. There is not a tittle of evidence to prove that they ever stooped to receive a bribe to purchase their silence or their apostacy. Never has it been established against them that either at the pleasure or under the dictation of any man, whether a Minister of the Crown or a dispenser of the Royal Bounty, they had cherished their religious principles with a less devoted affection, or contended for the enlargement of their religious and civil privileges with a zeal and determination less ardent and persevering.

In the preceding pages I have sketched from au-

thentic documents the history of the Royal Bounty, and vindicated, by an appeal to incontrovertible facts, the character of the Distributors and Recipients from the calumnious imputations by which they have been so unsparingly assailed. If I have at all succeeded in conveying my own impressions to the reader's mind, I shall have accomplished one of the principal objects I had contemplated in the present Tract. A sufficient answer will have been given to the objection which was first, and with no small parade, urged against this Grant as a "bribe" and "hush money" purposely conferred upon the Dissenters to bind them to silence on the great subjects of their religious and civil grievances.

There is one other objection of more recent growth, upon which it may be proper to offer a few remarks, not so much on account of its intrinsic weight, as of the extraordinary importance assigned to it by some zealous Dissenters in their late public proceedings. It has been contended that the Grant is paid out of a fund created by the compulsory taxation of the people for the support of religion, and therefore violates what is pronounced to be a fundamental Dissenting principle, that the maintenance of Christian worship should be left wholly to the voluntary offerings of its votaries.

Whether it be inexpedient in all conceivable circumstances that some contribution should be made from the national purse to provide the means of religious and moral instruction for all, or for any portion of the subjects of the State, is a question too large in its extent to be incidentally discussed

in a work of this nature. Certain I am, however, that such a provision as is here supposed, whatever place it may hold in the opinion of any class of modern Dissenters, militated against no principle of the early Non-conformists, the first Trustees and earlier Beneficiaries of the *Regium Donum*, and constituted no part of the conscientious scruples which compelled them to keep aloof from the communion of the Established Church.

But if all that is pleaded for by the most rigid Dissenter on this point, were conceded, still the principle does not in the least bear upon the *Regium Donum* to English Dissenting Ministers. This is no fund for the maintenance of religious worship, unless, indeed, it be so remotely and consequentially. By relieving the more pressing necessities of indigent Ministers, and liberating their minds for a season from the perplexing embarrassments of poverty, it may leave them more at leisure, with a fuller command of their intellectual and moral energies, to discharge the duties of their pastoral office. But this is the whole extent of its influence and efficacy in this way. That it was ever intended to be, or, with any show of reason, can be construed into anything approaching to the nature of a religious endowment, is distinctly disproved by all that is known of its real history and design. I have shown, upon testimony that cannot be impeached, that the Grant was in its origin strictly eleemosynary. The class of destitute persons for whose exclusive benefit the money was first bestowed, the widows of poor Dissenting Ministers, furnishes alone demonstrative evidence that this was its true and sole character.

When the Grant was subsequently augmented, and its object enlarged, its principle remained unchanged: it was still a charitable donation, emanating from the bounty of the Sovereign, for the relief as well of poor Dissenting Ministers themselves, as of their destitute Widows.

But this Grant to the Ministers of Religion violates, it is affirmed, a fundamental principle of Dissent, because the money is derived from the compulsory taxation of the people.

A very slight acquaintance with the history of the public revenue, as to its sources and appropriation, would suffice to dissipate the entire force of this objection, to which some persons have attached great weight.

By the Constitution of this country, the Sovereign, on assuming the regal office, came into possession of large revenues, to meet the expenditure incident to his rank and functions. These were regarded by the law as his patrimony, and constituted one of his most important and recognised prerogatives. The principal source from which they were derived consisted of the territorial possessions, *terræ dominicales regis*, or demesne lands of the Crown, which descended to the King by inheritance. Large sums were also obtained from certain manorial and other rights which had their origin in the feudal system.

As the people advanced in civilization and freedom, some of the ancient customary payments were felt to be inconvenient and offensive, and unsuitable to the new state of society. The Parliament, therefore, sharing the sentiments, whilst it acted as

the organ of the nation, entered into an amicable compact with the Sovereign, by which it was agreed that the obnoxious imposts should be remitted for ever, the House of Commons pledging itself to provide in their stead an annual sum equivalent to their estimated average produce. Under this arrangement, the King's income consisted of two principal parts; the money still derived from the profits of the Crown lands, and that which he received from the Parliament as a composition for the fiscal dues relinquished to the public.

Previously to the Revolution of 1688, the whole of the public revenues from every source was lodged in the King's hands, and placed at his personal disposal. Serious evils having, however, resulted from this practice, especially during the reign of the Stuarts, who misapplied the money to various purposes detrimental to the public weal, it was deemed expedient, on the accession of William and Mary, to change the system, and place the public revenue and expenditure on a different footing.

The revenues were then divided into the two branches of ordinary and extraordinary. The ordinary revenues, comprehending the produce of the Crown lands, and a certain portion of the composition for the remitted fiscal prerogatives, were formed into a fixed sum, to be applied to defray the charges of the Royal Person and the Civil Government, and thence called the "Civil List." It was first fixed at 600,000*l.*, but afterwards increased to 700,000*l.* per annum. The extraordinary revenue, consisting of the balance of the purchased hereditary revenues, with such additions

as the Parliament might from time to time find it necessary to make, to meet the exigencies of the State, were appropriated to defray the expenses of the other branches of the public service. The system thus established at the Revolution for the support of the new Sovereign, was continued during the succeeding reigns of Anne, George I., and George II.

Though a large proportion of the income, or Civil List, thus granted to the Sovereigns, was meant to defray the charges of the Royal household, it was yet distinctly understood that they had a right to appropriate such a portion as to them might appear proper, to objects of public or private beneficence. In the exercise of this right, King William made a grant of 1200*l.* a-year to the Presbyterians of the North of Ireland, which is still paid. Queen Anne, also, by a "splendid instance of royal munificence," as Blackstone calls it, gave away one entire branch of the hereditary revenues, those derived from the "first fruits and tenths of all the spiritual preferments in the kingdom." She was not content to relinquish this large source of income for herself only, and without prejudice to her successors, but made a permanent alienation of it by her Royal Charter, vesting the entire produce in trustees for ever, "to form a perpetual fund for the augmentation of poor livings." Such was the origin of what is now known by the name of "Queen Anne's Bounty." Whilst she was thus careful to provide for the wants of the poor Clergy of the Established Church, she extended her Christian liberality to the Presbyterian Ministers of Ireland, adding 800*l.* per annum to the

Royal Bounty applied to their support, to be appropriated to the Ministers of the South, which is still continued ; and she proposed to contribute to the relief of poor English Dissenting Ministers, by placing in the hands of Dr. Daniel Williams the sum of 1000*l.* to be by him applied for their benefit ; a trust which that worthy man, from personal scruples, declined to accept.

In the same spirit, and in the exercise of the same indisputable right, George I. granted, as we have seen, first of all 500*l.* for the relief of the poor widows of Dissenting Ministers, and afterwards 500*l.* for assisting poor Ministers, both sums to be paid annually. These annuities were classed among the Royal Charities, and were always paid out of the King's privy purse.

On the accession of George III. an important change took place in the mode of providing the Civil List. One of the first acts of his reign was to relinquish all that remained at his disposal of the hereditary crown revenues, placing them under the control of Parliament, upon receiving in their stead a stated annual income, first settled at 800,000*l.*, but augmented in 1777 to 900,000*l.* The change thus made in the King's income was, however, more in form than in substance. The money was still to be drawn from the produce of the Crown lands and the other hereditary revenues, which the Parliament had purchased for the public, and taken under its own supervision and management, subject to this annual charge.

No alteration was at this time made in reference to the Royal Charities. Those which had descended

from the preceding reigns, as fixed charges on the Civil List, and among them the Royal Bounty to Dissenting Ministers, were still paid, as before, from the King's privy purse.

The sums at which the annual income of the Sovereign had been successively fixed subsequently to the Revolution, were found at several periods insufficient to defray all the charges of the Civil List, and Parliament was, in consequence, repeatedly called upon by the Minister to make good the deficiency by a special vote. One application of this kind was made in 1804, during the administration of Mr. Pitt. After naming the large sum he should require to pay off the arrears of the Civil List, which he attributed to an unavoidable increase of expenditure created by the state of the times, the Minister added that, as this expenditure was likely to continue, it would be necessary, for the purpose of avoiding future applications of the same kind, to add to the permanent income of the Sovereign the annual sum of 60,000*l*. Though this might appear a very great addition, he informed the House that it would occasion no increase of the burdens of the people, because the annual produce of the Royal revenues which His Majesty had relinquished, was considerably more than the entire amount of the Civil List, with the proposed augmentation.*

* Mr. Justice Blackstone asserts that when the Civil List was, in 1777, increased to 900,000*l*. the public were gainers by the bargain with the King of 100,000*l*. per annum. Mr. Pitt, July 2, 1804, stated that the hereditary revenues relinquished by George III. in lieu of the fixed Civil List granted in return by Parliament, then amounted to 1,500,000*l*., leaving a balance of

In order that the expenses of the Royal household might not appear to the public greater than they really were, Mr. Pitt proposed at this time to take from the Civil List sundry payments then charged upon it, some of which were of an occasional nature, belonging to various branches of the public service, having no connexion with the King's establishment, and others were permanent allowances or charitable grants, for which the Civil List stood pledged. These he estimated at 135,000*l.* a-year, which he meant thenceforth to provide for by special annual votes of Parliament. Among the payments thus transferred from the Civil List were certain of the Royal Charities, including the grant to poor French refugee clergy and laity, the allowance to the Irish Presbyterians, and the Royal Bounty to poor Dissenting Ministers of England. From this date, consequently, the *Regium Donum* became virtually a Parliamentary Grant.

The compact entered into respecting the hereditary revenues of the Crown by the Parliament and George III., with the alterations now introduced by Mr. Pitt, formed the basis of the Civil

540,000*l.* in favour of the public, after raising the Civil List to 960,000*l.* "He (Mr. Pitt) reminded the House that the Civil List was but a commutation which His Majesty had accepted on his accession to the throne, for a large hereditary revenue." "He begged it to be distinctly understood by the House and the public, that that branch of the hereditary revenues which had been enjoyed by His Majesty's predecessors, and in lieu of which he had thought proper to accept a Civil List, had so far advanced that it now amounted to nearly 1,500,000*l.* a-year. From this, therefore, it appeared that the addition of 60,000*l.* to 900,000*l.* a-year left a considerable balance in favour of the public."—*Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. vii. p. 910.

List granted to George IV. on his assumption of the Royal authority in 1812. The permanent Royal Charities which it had been customary to pay out of the King's privy purse were still recognised as a part of the charges to be provided for ; and those payments which Mr. Pitt had taken from the Civil List to be annually voted by Parliament, were also omitted on this occasion by Mr. Percival, on the understanding that they were to be continued in the same manner.*

The *Regium Donum* was, by this means, continued a Parliamentary Grant. The change was, however, more in name than in substance. It must still be deemed to be actually a gift of the Royal bounty, which the Parliament, for certain explained reasons of state expediency, has undertaken to pay on the behalf and as the substitute of the King, out of the proceeds of the hereditary revenues of the Crown. In its present form the Grant has, however, this advantage : being now openly made in the face of Parliament for a defined purpose, no suspicions can exist as to the design of the donor, and the duties, actual or implied, of the Trustees. Though continuing to act as the almoners of the Sovereign in the distribution of his bounty among their neces-

* "The next thing to which he would direct the attention of the Committee, was the pensions and allowances which His Majesty permanently bestowed on the objects of his bounty. These charges were always, and with propriety, taken out of the privy purse ; and as the Committee would certainly think it necessary to continue those grants, he imagined that there was no necessity for making any difference with respect to the fund out of which they should be satisfied."—*Mr. Percival's speech on the King's Household Bill, Jan. 16th, 1812. Hansard's Parl. Debates, vol. xxi. p. 157.*

sitous brethren, they are held publicly responsible to the country and to the Government for the faithful execution of their trust.

The objection, therefore, so vehemently urged against the Grant as an extorted contribution from the pockets of the public for the support of religion in violation of what is called the "voluntary principle," proves to be a mere phantom of the imagination, which, when exposed to the light of truth, vanishes into "empty air."

Such, then, are the outlines of the history of the *Regium Donum* and Parliamentary Grant to poor Dissenting Ministers, which it would have been easy to fill up by the addition of a multiplicity of minor details, had they been necessary for the development and illustration of its true nature and design. Such, too, is the vindication I respectfully offer to the deliberate and candid consideration of those whom the subject may interest, of the principles and conduct of the Distributors and Recipients, from imputations which are as ungenerous and malignant as they have been shown to be calumnious and false.

The two great points which it has been my endeavour to impress upon the reader's conviction, are, first, That the Royal Bounty, under both its forms, was always essentially and purely a charitable grant, partaking in no degree of the nature of a contribution from the State for the support of religion; and, secondly, That the Trustees have uniformly received it from the King and the Parliament as a charitable benefaction, to be applied to the relief of meritorious indigence, without any ex-

traneous consideration of a political kind having, in a single instance, been mixed up, either by express stipulation or implied condition, with their official functions and responsibility.

Can it, I would now ask, be requisite to add a single sentence in support of these propositions? Have they not been fully demonstrated,—not, indeed, by the skill and eloquence of the writer, but by the irresistible force of the clear, ample, and decisive evidence of indisputable facts? What, then, shall I say of the conduct of those Dissenters who have set themselves in array against the Grant, and called upon the Legislature for its discontinuance? By adopting, and through their example giving public countenance to the slanderous representations of it which have so long passed current in certain circles, they have, though in some cases I am bound to believe with no unkind feeling or intention, inflicted deep injury on the character and reputation of men not less conscientious than any of their accusers in their dissent from the Church established by law; not less impatient of all restraints upon their religious rights and liberties; not less ardent in their attachment to the most expansive principles of Christian freedom; not less active and zealous in their efforts to emancipate themselves and their brethren from the degrading shackles of political and ecclesiastical tyranny.

The calumnies being now one by one detected and exposed, the real nature of the Grant, the beneficent intentions of the Sovereign, and the integrity of the Distributors and Recipients being made manifest, it is the obvious duty of the Dissenters who had been

led astray by the prevalent misconceptions, to retrace their steps, or at least to refrain from all further active hostility. For on what plea will they justify the continuance or reiteration of their supplications to the Legislature to violate the compact solemnly entered into by the Crown and the Parliament, and thus endeavour to cut off the poor Dissenting Ministers of England and Wales from the Royal benefaction, specially bestowed for their relief? Will they still maintain the practical solecism, that the Royal Bounty is a Dissenting grievance? Will they still contend that to receive an eleemosynary donation like this from the Privy Purse of the King is a violation of the principles and an injury to the interests of the Dissenters? I must be excused if I designate objections like these serious trifling. From the judgement of such adversaries I would appeal to the justice and liberality of every enlightened and reflecting member of the Dissenting community. I prefer no request, I deprecate no censures, on behalf of the Trustees of the Royal and Parliamentary Bounty. With my reverend and esteemed associates I have joined in laying before the public all that we thought it necessary to advance in explanation of our official duties, and the justification of our principles and character. But I do adjure those whom I now specially address, to pause and reflect before they approach the Government or the Legislature as petitioners for the discontinuance of a charitable fund, which for more than a century has annually administered important assistance to hundreds of worthy men, devoting themselves with unextinguishable zeal to the sa-

cred duties of the Christian Ministry. I beseech them not to join hastily and rashly in unrighteous attempts to sacrifice the substantial interests of those who have deserved well of their country and their religion, by their pious and unrequited labours, to some fine-wrought theory of religious freedom and independence, and thus endeavour to establish a favourite, but, possibly, a fanciful speculation at the heavy cost of the essential comforts of multitudes of indigent and suffering families. Until it shall be fully and unequivocally demonstrated, not by constructive but direct and irresistible evidence, that some grievous practical evil, affecting alike the honour and the interests of the Dissenters, results from this beneficent donation, let them leave to His Majesty and to the Parliament the honour they have so long enjoyed of devoting a portion of the Royal patrimony, the hereditary revenues of the Sovereign, to relieve the wants, to exhilarate the spirits, to encourage and extend the usefulness of faithful servants of the Saviour, who, from their peculiar circumstances,—“*troubled on every side, by reason of their poverty, yet not distressed, perplexed but not in despair, cast down but not destroyed,*”—present strong and resistless claims to public sympathy, commiseration, and support.

NOTE A.

(Referred to above, page 28.)

AFTER the preceding pages had been sent to the press, I was told that a valued friend, well known for the extent and accuracy of his knowledge of the early history of the Dissenters, the Rev. Joseph Hunter, late of Bath, was in possession of some old documents which ascribed to the *Regium Donum* a "disreputable origin." In reply to some inquiries which I addressed to him on the subject, he informed me that the account to which I referred was contained in some unpublished Memoirs of his Life and Times, written by a Mr. Richard Ricards, a gentleman of great respectability, and a zealous Dissenter in the earlier part of the last century. He was born in 1687, and began his Memoirs in 1750. With Mr. Hunter's permission, I shall here insert the whole of the passage relating to the *Regium Donum*, with which he has kindly favoured me, being anxious that the reader should have before him all the information and all the charges I am able to collect, to aid him in forming a correct judgement as to the nature and influence of this Grant.

"The Dissenters, in the year 1732, being generally of opinion that it was then a proper time to apply to Parliament to release them from their shackles, imposed and fastened on them by the High Church persecuting party when in power, they thought the Test Act an infringement upon liberty, a hardship on conscientious clergymen as well as on the Dissenters, and was of no efficacy to keep out of place the atheist, the irreligious, or the prophane, and therefore a national evil. They therefore appointed deputies from the several congregations in and about London to prosecute the repeals of the said Act and the Corporation Act, which was equally pernicious. But

their friends in the Administration desiring it to be postponed, they not being yet ready to assist them, it was deferred until about this time [1734], when the said deputies thought it necessary to proceed, not only as believing it to be a proper time to expect success as they ever again were likely to have, but also to comply with the general sense and desire of the Dissenters of all denominations throughout the kingdom. A Committee of twenty-one was therefore appointed from among them by ballot to solicit the affair. I was one of that Committee. How the attempt came to miscarry, many now living can well remember. The secession of many of the principal deputies [Mr. Holden, Mr. Brooksbank, who had Court boroughs given them afterwards, and others,] from their meeting at Pinners' Hall, and their making a separate assembly, the boroughs given or promised to some of the Dissenting laity, and some of their clergy* suffering themselves to be corrupted by the most expert and successful man in that way, Sir Robert Walpole, that ever England bred, it struck a damp and coldness on the application, and gave such a spirit to the opposition that it is a wonder there were so many friends to liberty, and independent, that had the courage at that time to own their principles, when they had the Ministry as well as the Tories to contend with †.

* "Dr. Earl, Dr. Harris, Dr. Evans, T. Bradbury, and several others. It is said that the whole sum given among them, called *Regis Donum*, is but 1000*l.* per annum; but it is believed that Dr. Earl alone has the disposal of 500*l.* per annum."

† "I attended the House of Commons during the time that the affair lay before them, and heard Sir R. W. say that the concessions to the Dissenters were settled and agreed to at the Revolution; that they were as much or more than the Dissenters deserved; that he knew a great many of them, and that not one of those that he was acquainted with, solicited for, or so much as desired the Repeal. Sir John Barnard, who for some particular reason began to lean to the Court, said that he was brought up among the most rigid of the Dissenters (meaning the Quakers); that he did not know one honest man among them that approved of the present application; and that those Dissenters who were strenuous for the Repeal were such only as wanted to be preferred into places of trust and

"Thus fell our hopes of recovering Religious Liberty for this age, at the least; for who can be trusted when our own pastors betray us and touch the poison? It may be asked what could our ministers allege in excuse for their behaviour, and to what purpose did they finger public money? The only plausible reasons for it (and these very bad ones,) were given me by one of those very ministers (Dr. Harris), who in every other respect was esteemed, as a man of learning, integrity, and good-nature, viz. that there were many poor ministers among them who wanted help; that it made the Distributors of the money more respectable, and of consequence, more capable of being useful, and that if they refused the money it would come into the hands of persons that were more exceptionable, and who might make a bad use of it; and insinuated that if the Test Act, &c., were repealed, and the Dissenters got into places, it might make them more remiss in their way of living, more wavering in their principles, and thereby weaken the Dissenting interest. The very reverse thereof many now living are able to demonstrate. Have not many of the rich Dissenters left us quite, notwithstanding the Test Act remains in force; others of them married their children to conformists, and given them large fortunes; and not a few who, seeing no prospect of the repeals, form ambitious views or worse, have left off all public worship as unnecessary?"—*Extracted from MS. Memoirs of his Life and Times, by Mr. Richard Ricards: written in 1755.*

Before I offer any remark upon the specific charges here preferred against certain lay gentlemen and Ministers,

power, that they might thereby have an opportunity to distress and persecute the Church of England, as they do now, and have constantly done, to the Episcopalians in Scotland, where Presbytery is the Established Religion. When I mention the word Court, I do not include the King nor any of the Royal Family, who, I believe, to be all of them for liberty of conscience, and against persecution as much as I am myself. Neither do I mean all the Ministry; some of them being of honest, generous, and charitable principles; but only the leading men among them, whose only principles are self."

of political apostacy, and of "striking a damp and coldness" on the application for the repeal of the Sacramental Test, it may not be uninteresting to inquire a little into the conduct pursued in this affair by the writer himself, and the persons with whom he acted. The result, if I mistake not, will enable us pretty well to account for the language of censure and crimination which he applies to the respectable gentlemen named in the preceding extract, and warrant us in admitting the degrading imputations with considerable hesitation and scepticism.

The reader will have seen from what is related above (pp. 23-26), that the Association of lay gentlemen which had assembled in Silver-street Chapel to concert measures for obtaining the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts dissolved itself in December 1732, after the appointment of deputies from the congregations to which they belonged, to form a standing body to prosecute the same object. Their Committee, however, of which Mr. Holden was the Chairman, continued in office; and even after the organization of the Deputies, was by consent allowed to exercise its original functions on their behalf till the 8th of January 1734-5, when they chose a new Committee out of their own body.

Among the Dissenting laity of London there were at this time some individuals, distinguished by the extreme ardour of their zeal, who would admit the force of no arguments grounded on considerations of prudence or expediency, for not pressing the consideration of their case upon the Legislature; and who availed themselves of every opportunity to express in the strongest terms their reprehension of every day's delay in urging upon the Government and the Parliament the instant repeal of the obnoxious statutes. In the beginning of 1733-4, the opposition of these ultra-Dissenters to the more moderate party assumed an organized form. At a Meeting of the Dissenting Deputies held at Pinners' Hall, after "several of the principal deputies," including Mr. Holden and Mr. Brooksbank, had, according to our

author, "seceded," the remaining gentlemen proceeded to choose a Committee of twenty-one, a Captain Winter being named the Chairman. This is the Committee mentioned by Mr. Ricards, of which he, as one of the more zealous class, was appointed a member. The other members, then chosen for various reasons, were Mr. Bance, Mr. Garland, Dr. Avery, Mr. Copeland, Mr. Lamb, Mr. Cox, Mr. Hollister, Mr. Leeds, Mr. Adams, Mr. Reynolds, Mr. Limery, Mr. Bendish, Mr. Walridge, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Coope, Mr. Colyer, Mr. Lane, Mr. Burroughs, and Mr. Palmer. The gentlemen then present assumed the name and the functions of the Society of Dissenting Deputies, and in that character issued directions to the Dissenting congregations throughout England and Wales, to appoint Deputies to meet them at Pinners' Hall in the approaching month of April. These curious proceedings were mentioned at a General Meeting of the other Deputies and the original Committee, held on the 6th of March 1733-4, by the Chairman, Mr. Holden, in the following Address, which I shall insert entire.

"Gentlemen,—The moderate resolutions you came to at our last Meeting*, gave just ground to hope they would have had the desired effect of satisfying all the objections, and conciliating the minds of such gentlemen as were then in a different way of thinking from us. But with great concern it is I am to inform you, that the success has been so far from answering our expectations, that those in opposition, who were before for deposing the Committee, have now proceeded to set you aside (unless you act with them), and assumed to themselves the name of "The Deputies of the several Congregations of Protestant Dissenters of the Three Denominations in London and within ten miles thereof," though their numbers, upon collecting the ballot (if I am rightly informed), did not exceed forty-six; who, though so inconsiderable a number in comparison with you, do, by an act of yours on their first attempt to form themselves into a distinct

* Probably those inserted above, p. 25.

body, (when you protested against such a proceeding and left them,) draw this conclusion, that you, though an allowed majority, devolved all your power on them,—a way of reasoning till now, I believe, unheard of.

“These gentlemen have come to a resolution of such a nature and importance, as may not affect us only, but the peace of the kingdom, by issuing out their directions to the Ministers of the Three Denominations in every city and port and chief town of every county in England and Wales and Berwick-upon-Tweed, to desire their congregations to choose Deputies, and return them to Captain James Winter, their Chairman, to meet them at Pinners’ Hall on the first Wednesday in April. I thought myself indispensably obliged to give you the trouble of meeting on so important an occasion, to consider what is proper to be done by us to prevent the mischief which may arise from a scheme, than which the most malicious of our enemies could scarce have formed one that may draw after it consequences more fatal to us and more detrimental to the public in the present situation of affairs,—a scheme visibly calculated, not for the interests of the Dissenters, but with other views; since none can be so void of common sense as to suppose the Dissenters throughout the kingdom of England, dominion of Wales, and the town of Berwick-upon-Tweed, should send Deputies to meet at Pinners’ Hall the first Wednesday in April, or indeed at all, till they knew for what. No; it is to be hoped they will rather attend to that which is of far greater importance,—the putting their own and the nation’s concerns into those hands who are known friends to the civil and religious liberties of both.”

After Mr. Holden had concluded this address, the gentlemen present resolved, *nem. con.*,

“That the meeting of a small number of Deputies in a separate body, under the name of ‘The Deputies of the several Congregations of Protestant Dissenters of the Three Denominations in and within ten miles of London,’ in opposition to a great majority of the whole body of

Deputies, tends to divide and weaken the interests of the Dissenters."

Notwithstanding the course taken by the party at Pinners' Hall, the majority of the Deputies continued to act through the original Committee till the 8th of January 1734-5, when a new Committee of twenty-five gentlemen was chosen to conduct the application then about to be made to the Legislature. The members of this Committee were, Mr. S. Holden, Mr. S. Brooksbank, Mr. J. Bance, Mr. B. Burroughs, Mr. M. Howard, Mr. Thomas Hollis, Mr. S. Lessingham, Mr. B. Mee, Mr. J. Paice, Jun., Mr. J. Ruck, Captain James Winter, Mr. J. Copeland, Dr. B. Avery, Mr. T. Owen, Mr. T. Lane, Mr. M. Raper, Mr. Lewis Way, Mr. R. Cromwell, Mr. D. Booth, Mr. Ob. Marriott, Mr. Thomas Watson, Mr. R. Garland, Mr. James Lamb, Mr. N. Newnham, and Mr. A. Walburge. Mr. Ricards's name does not appear in this list. It would seem, however, that in the course of this year measures were taken to heal the divisions which had unhappily occurred in the Dissenting body; for after the reappointment of the Deputies at the commencement of the following year, a new grand Committee was chosen on the 14th of January 1735-36, consisting of the twenty-five gentlemen of the former Committee, with the addition of six others, including Mr. Ricards.

It is apparent from the preceding facts, that Mr. Ricards, in that part of the Memoirs of his Life and Times quoted above, must be viewed as an historian liable to be biased in his judgement and his statements by a regard to the personal reputation of himself and his associates. When animadverting on the public conduct of Mr. Holden, Mr. Brooksbank, and the Distributors of the *Regium Donum*, it cannot be forgotten that he is criticising the proceedings of persons to whom he and his friends were directly, not to say vehemently, opposed. Without impeaching his general veracity, or attacking his moral character, against which I know of no imputation, I may therefore be permitted to

suggest, that the extreme warmth of his zeal as a Dissenter, his morbid impatience at the cautious and prudent course which the Committee had deemed it advisable to pursue, and a natural anxiety to justify the opposition in which he had been an active agent, may have imparted a severity to his judgement, and a strength and bitterness to his language, wholly unwarranted by the circumstances of the case. If Mr. Holden and Mr. Brooksbank were not at heart friends to the repeal of the Sacramental Test, what possible inducement could gentlemen of their high character have had in voluntarily joining themselves to a number of men, the avowed and sole purpose of whose association was to secure this great measure? They took a prominent part in the proceedings of this body; and the only ground of accusation against them is, that they acted with deliberate caution, and declined to press the measure when they and their colleagues were of opinion that they should best serve the interests of the Dissenters by a temporary delay. And surely a candid historian could have believed that such conduct might have proceeded from some less corrupt and dishonourable motive than the hope of being rewarded by a "Court borough."

But with these lay gentlemen I have here no immediate concern, and they need not my vindication. I cannot, however, dismiss the charge preferred against them without one further remark. Mr. Ricards, the reader will perceive, differs from the other adversaries of the *Regium Donum* in this respect, that whilst they assign to that Grant the mighty power of corrupting the whole body of Dissenters, and of paralysing all their efforts to obtain the extension of their civil and religious privileges, Mr. Ricards has discovered, in the assumed secret promises of Ministerial Parliamentary patronage, the supposed cause of the apostacy and inertness of the wealthier laymen, and restricted the baneful influence of the Royal Bounty to the clerical members alone.

The charges which this gentleman prefers against the Distributors of the *Regium Donum*, specifying by name

Dr. Earl, Dr. Harris, Dr. Evans, and Mr. T. Bradbury, are these, that they suffered themselves to be corrupted by Sir Robert Walpole, whom he designates "the most expert and successful man in that way," and in consequence, "struck a damp and coldness on the application," and by "betraying" the Dissenters, destroyed their confidence in their leaders.

So far as the imputation of corruption applies to Dr. Harris, I have already, I trust, sufficiently refuted it. The Dissenters had no firmer, more zealous, and consistent friend. No man was more decidedly opposed to the iniquity of the Sacramental Test, or contributed more valuable and efficient services in the earlier attempts to obtain its repeal, than those which he rendered, by engaging the Dissenting laity in the cause, and promoting the institution of an organized body of men, of high character and acknowledged judgement and ability, to conduct the appeals to the Legislature for the removal of this and every other Dissenting grievance. Mr. Ricards's charge is accompanied by no new evidence of guilt to require another word in his defence. Nor shall I offer any vindication of Dr. Earl, Dr. Evans, or Mr. Bradbury. Their case must, in all material respects, be identical with that of their respected associate, and they have each of them left a reputation fully sufficient to maintain their characters in the good opinion of the present and future generations, against such sweeping accusations of political profligacy.

But Mr. Ricards was at a loss to imagine what excuse the Ministers could allege for their behaviour, and for what purpose they fingered the public money; and he kindly favours us with the reasons, "plausible," only, and "very bad ones," though they were, which were given him by Dr. Harris, who, with the exception of his concern in this affair, was, he admits, "esteemed a man of learning, integrity, and good nature."

Dr. Harris, it seems, first pleaded as his excuse that "there were many poor Ministers who wanted help."

And was it really a crime, requiring an apology or "excuse," to accept from the King's privy purse a voluntary grant of money in trust to be applied to so beneficent a purpose? To supply food to the famishing, medicine to the sick, and clothes to the naked; to afford comfort to the afflicted, and hope and joy to desponding worth, though the means were obtained from a Royal hand, furnish no very obvious proofs of political corruption.

Another "excuse" was, that the Royal Bounty "made the Distributors more respectable, and of consequence, more capable of being useful." What! was Dr. Harris, the honoured colleague of the ever-to-be revered Lardner, so weak and silly a man as to believe and assert, that to accept from the Minister of the Crown a bribe to abandon his principles and betray the cause of his fellow-Dissenters could, by any possibility, make him "more RESPECTABLE"? And will it be credited that this "man of learning and INTEGRITY" could gravely allege that such an act of gratuitous profligacy could render him capable of being more "USEFUL"? If Dr. Harris addressed such language as this to the author, which there is no reason to question, it may surely be construed into a demonstrative proof that when he uttered it, his heart acquitted him of all guilt in the acceptance and execution of his trust.

The last reason is, "that if they refused the money, it might come into the hands of persons that were more exceptionable, and who *might make a bad use of it.*"

Assuming the truth of the charge of apostacy preferred against the Distributors by the author, and that the money was granted as a bribe to silence, that which would render any man more "exceptionable" in the Trust was his not being quite so subservient to his masters, or less zealous in earning the wages of corruption, by placing every possible obstacle in the way of those Dissenters who were labouring for the enlargement of their liberties; and the "bad uses" to be made of the money by such a person must be understood to mean any other appropriation of it than that which would aid the corrupt de-

signs and measures of the profligate Minister of the Crown. But will any man believe that Dr. Harris could have had a meaning of this kind? Upon the only fair interpretation of the words, it is apparent that he must have looked to the Grant as a purely charitable fund, exempt from all objection on the score of morality; that the "exceptionable" persons would be they who would in any way betray their trust to the injury of the intended beneficiaries; and that to make a "bad use" of it would be to divert the money to any other purpose than to administer relief to the destitute widow or indigent Minister, whose privations were caused by their conscientious dissent.

"Bad" as our author might be disposed to regard these "reasons," to my understanding they appear to be very fair and satisfactory, implying throughout a consciousness on the part of the Distributor that in accepting the trust, he and his reverend colleagues were acting without any violation of their principles as Dissenters, without any impeachment of their honour as men, without any taint of disgrace upon their character as Christians and Christian Ministers.

But Dr. Harris, it is added, insinuated that "if the Test Act were repealed, and the Dissenters got into place, it might make them more remiss in their way of living, and more wavering in their principles." If these be taken as general observations, I fear they must be admitted to have great truth in reference to many cases. But does it follow that such a remark implies a disinclination or an aversion to get rid of an oppressive enactment? The inference, as it respects Dr. Harris, is sufficiently disproved by the manner in which he came forward to contribute his powerful assistance to procure the emancipation of the Dissenters from legislative enactments, which, whilst they served to degrade an honourable body of men below their just rank in society, operated as an insult and an injury to Christianity itself. Upon the whole, therefore, this new witness in support of the oft-

APPENDIX.

Brief Statement of the Regium Donum and Parliamentary Grant to Poor Dissenting Ministers: by the Trustees.

THE subject of the *Regium Donum* and *Parliamentary Grant* to the poor Dissenting Ministers of England and Wales, has engaged a considerable share of the attention of the Dissenters, in their late proceedings relative to the assertion of their principles and the redress of their grievances. By some persons it has been denounced as one of the evils of which the Dissenters have a right to complain, the reception of which they have pronounced to be "inexpedient and improper," and the immediate discontinuance of which they have thought a fit object for Memorial or Petition to the Government and the Legislature.

Under a full conviction that the strong feeling of disapprobation which has been thus manifested against this Grant is altogether founded in ignorance or misapprehension of its true character, we deem it to be due to the Sovereigns who have successively bestowed this mark of the Royal favour, to the Parliament which has for some time past continued it on behalf of the Crown, and to the Distributors who have had the honour of acting during so long a period as the Almoners of the Royal Bounty to their necessitous brethren, to endeavour to rectify the prevalent mistakes by submitting to the consideration of the Dissenting Public a brief statement of the origin and nature of this Fund.

For the only authentic account of its origin we are indebted to Dr. EDMUND CALAMY, who was a contemporary of its benevolent Royal Founder, and one of the first-

APPENDIX.

Brief Statement of the Regium Donum and Parliamentary Grant to Poor Dissenting Ministers: by the Trustees.

THE subject of the *Regium Donum* and *Parliamentary Grant* to the poor Dissenting Ministers of England and Wales, has engaged a considerable share of the attention of the Dissenters, in their late proceedings relative to the assertion of their principles and the redress of their grievances. By some persons it has been denounced as one of the evils of which the Dissenters have a right to complain, the reception of which they have pronounced to be "inexpedient and improper," and the immediate discontinuance of which they have thought a fit object for Memorial or Petition to the Government and the Legislature.

Under a full conviction that the strong feeling of disapprobation which has been thus manifested against this Grant is altogether founded in ignorance or misapprehension of its true character, we deem it to be due to the Sovereigns who have successively bestowed this mark of the Royal favour, to the Parliament which has for some time past continued it on behalf of the Crown, and to the Distributors who have had the honour of acting during so long a period as the Almoners of the Royal Bounty to their necessitous brethren, to endeavour to rectify the prevalent mistakes by submitting to the consideration of the Dissenting Public a brief statement of the origin and nature of this Fund.

For the only authentic account of its origin we are indebted to Dr. EDMUND CALAMY, who was a contemporary of its benevolent Royal Founder, and one of the first-

appointed Trustees. In the "Memoirs" of his "Life and Times" lately published, (vol. ii. p. 465—467,) under the year 1723, he writes as follows :

"About this time His Majesty [George I.] was pleased in a private way to give the Dissenters a considerable taste of his Royal Bounty and kind regard to them by an annual allowance. The first motion for it was made by Mr. *Daniel Burgess*, who had for some time been Secretary to the Princess of Wales. He, of his own head, and out of good will to those among whom he had had his education, moved for something of that kind to the Lord Viscount *Townsend*, who readily fell in with it, and afterwards discoursed his brother *Walpole* about it, who also concurred. Upon its being mentioned to the King, he was very free to it, and soon ordered 500*l.* to be paid out of the Treasury for the use and behoof of the poor Widows of Dissenting Ministers. And some time after 500*l.* was, upon application made on that behalf, ordered to be paid each half year for the assisting either Ministers or their Widows, that wanted help, or to be applied to any such uses as the Distributors thought to be most for their interest*. An order was each half year obtained by Mr. *Burgess*, payable to Mr. *Ellis*, a surgeon: and when Mr. *Burgess* received it, he paid it to the following persons, viz. Mr. *William Tong*, Mr. *Jeremy Smith*, Mr. *Merril*, of Hampstead, Mr. *Thomas Reynolds*, Mr. *Matthew Clarke*, Dr. *Joshua Oldfield*, Mr. *John Evans*, Mr. *William Harris*, and myself; and as any of these persons died, the survivors chose another in his room."

From this simple statement it clearly appears that, when first made, the Grant was one of pure charity, designed for the relief of the poor Widows of Dissenting Ministers. The same compassionate feeling which dictated the first act of Royal Beneficence, prompted, shortly afterwards,

* It is not certain whether the antecedent to the words "their interest" be the "Ministers" and "Widows" of Dissenting Ministers, or "the Distributors": if the latter, it is unquestionable that Dr. Calamy intended "their interest" only in the sense of their being representatives of, and agents for, necessitous "Ministers or their Widows."

the augmentation of the Grant and extension of its benefits to poor Dissenting Ministers*.

There is not to be discovered in this transaction the slightest trace of any political feeling or purpose. No conditions were imposed on the part of the Crown when the money was paid, nor were any stipulations entered into by the Trustees and the Recipients which virtually pledged them to the support of the political principles and measures of the existing Administration. The Prime Minister did not even reserve to himself a voice in the appointment of the Distributors, to secure their subserviency. They were originally chosen without his interference, and the vacancies which have since occurred have been successively filled by the survivors at their own discretion; the appointment being, however, always made in reference to the age, character, public and official station, or generally acknowledged usefulness in the several Denominations, of the Ministers chosen into the Trust.

The Trustees have never, in any part of their public conduct, evinced a disposition to truckle to the Minister of State for the time being. In seasons of political excitement, they have not only asserted their independence, but have never scrupled to oppose existing Administrations when they have judged their measures to be injurious to the Protestant Dissenters, or inimical to the public good. They fearlessly challenge the world to point out a single instance in which their charge as Dispensers of the Royal Bounty has weakened their attachment to their principles as Nonconformists, or cooled the ardour of their zeal in the cause of Civil and Religious Freedom. They have from the first stood in the foremost ranks of those who have laboured to remove the unjust restrictions imposed

* When or why the Grant was at length confined to "Ministers," the present Distributors have no means of ascertaining. They received their Trust with this long-established limitation. It appears to them probable that this alteration in the objects of the Royal Bounty was made upon the establishment, a century ago, of "The Widows' Fund," a noble monument of the liberality of the "Three Denominations," raised principally by the zealous and generous exertions of Ministers associated in the Distribution of the Royal Charity.

upon Protestant Dissenters, and to obtain the enlargement of their liberties*.

To the provident wisdom and public spirit of one of their number, Dr. WILLIAM HARRIS, the Society of Deputies from Congregations of the Three Denominations of Dissenters in and around the Metropolis, owes its existence. It would be unfair to reproach the Deputies with acting ungratefully in some recent resolutions of theirs respecting the Parliamentary Grant, since they were probably unacquainted with their own parentage.

The Distributors repel the insinuation that in undertaking the charge of this charitable grant from the Crown and the Parliament, they are acting in violation of any acknowledged principle of Dissent. In their estimation, it is in no way opposed to the doctrine which they hold as firmly as any of their brethren, and for which most of them have in their public character pleaded as zealously, at least, as any Ministers of the Three Denominations, that Christianity should be supported by the free-will offering of its professors. They maintain, on historic grounds, that this Bounty of the Sovereign is in no respect a fund created by the compulsory taxation of the people for the maintenance of any system of Christian Worship.

Formerly the Kings of England, on their accession to the throne, became possessed of large hereditary revenues, out of which were defrayed the expenses of the Royal establishment, a great part of the charges of the executive government, and such charitable donations, whether of a temporary or a permanent nature, as the Sovereign might deem it proper to bestow. From this personal fund was paid, during the reigns of George I. and George II., the Royal Grant to poor Dissenting Ministers. On the ac-

* In the only case from the Foundation of the Grant in which political feelings disturbed the purity of its distribution, the body of the Distributors threw up their appointment; nor would they resume it until, on a change of Administration, it was acknowledged that the office was one of mere charity, and neither a reward of *past*, nor a pledge of *future*, adherence to the Ministers of the Crown. The case alluded to was in the feverish crisis of the first French Revolution.

cession of George III. it was thought advisable to substitute for these hereditary revenues, a fixed annual sum, equivalent to them in amount, which obtained the technical name of the Civil List. The charges which had been usually defrayed out of the rents and profits of the Royal demesnes, including the Grant to Dissenting Ministers, and other permanent charities, were now paid out of the new fund. In 1804, some alterations were made in the Civil List itself. Owing to heavy war expenses and other causes, it was found inadequate to all the purposes for which it had been designed, and the Parliament, on the application of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, voted an annual addition to it of 60,000*l*. In order, however, to simplify the public accounts, and to prevent the Civil List falling into arrear, it was at the same time settled to take from it certain payments, to the amount of 135,000*l*. per annum, and to provide for them separately by an annual vote of the House of Commons. Among the permanent charges thus transferred were certain Royal Charities, including the bounty to the poor French Refugee Clergy and Laity, and to the Dissenting Ministers of England and Wales. By this change the *Regium Donum* became a *Parliamentary Grant*. Its character was not, however, changed. The Parliament became, in fact, the King's almoner, and pledged its faith to continue the Royal Charities, which were considered as permanent charges on the Crown estates. Nor did the Parliament enter into this compact without securing ample means to fulfil it. When called upon to add the large sum of 60,000*l*. per annum to the Civil List, it was stated by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, that so favourable to the country had been the bargain for the Crown lands, that, after making up the full amount of the Civil List, with this increase, and defraying all the expenses chargeable upon it, there would remain a considerable balance in favour of the nation, to be appropriated to the public service.

From these facts it is apparent that the *Regium Donum*, or *Parliamentary Grant*, is not derived from the compul-

sory taxation of the people. And in this view of the case, the Dissenters have no cause to complain of this Grant as a forced contribution to support religion. To attempt, under a mistaken notion of its nature and purpose, to procure its discontinuance, is, therefore, as unjust as, if the attempt were to succeed, it would be injurious to the least protected and most deserving portion of the Dissenting Ministry. If any necessitous Dissenting Minister have conscientious objections to participate in the benefit of this Charity, he will do well to refuse it; and none will be more ready to respect and honour his scruples of conscience, however unfounded, than the Distributors themselves. But those who on speculative principles raise an objection to the Grant, act, as the Distributors must be allowed to think, neither wisely nor charitably in seeking to deprive a large and numerous class of Christian Ministers, whose independence and uprightness none will or can call in question, of pecuniary supplies, which, though small in amount, are of importance to the comfort of themselves and their families, and on the expected continuance of which their habits and plans of life are in some degree calculated.

Whatever may be pleaded in the excitement of debate, it is plain that no adequate substitute could be raised by the Dissenters for the Royal or Parliamentary Grant, which, as it has been unconditionally, graciously and generously given, it would be perverse and ungrateful to refuse. The Distributors, in the spirit, as they conceive, of this munificence of the Crown, have ever dispensed it amongst Ministers of the Three Denominations, and other Ministers not falling strictly under this description, but recommended by both their necessity and their character, without any stipulations, political or theological, expressed or implied. They have received the Royal Bounty as a simple Charity, designed to express the sense which the august Family now upon the Throne of these Realms, are pleased to entertain of the zeal and exertions of the Protestant Dissenters of the earlier part of the last century,

on behalf of their accession to the British Crown. They have always contemplated the Grant as having reference to the past and not to the future, and as laying no obligation whatever either upon them or the recipients, with regard to their faith or worship, or the exercise of civil franchises and political duties. They feel it to be an honour to be selected as the Almoners of a great and disinterested Charity. They look back with satisfaction to their predecessors in the Royal Trust, men of high name for learning, talents, character, independence, and distinguished usefulness in their several denominations. They affect no secrecy; they fear no publicity. Unmoved by misrepresentation and clamour, they will continue to exercise this Trust for the benefit of their needy brethren, as long as it shall seem fit to His Majesty's Government and the Commons' House of Parliament to fulfil the generous design and intent of the successive Princes of the House of Brunswick. Personal interest in the distribution they have none. They dare to appeal to the Searcher of Hearts in testimony of their invariable purpose and endeavour to preserve the Charity in its simplicity and purity, to dispense it with impartiality, and to make it as serviceable as possible to their brethren, suffering amidst useful labours under the trials of adversity. They cannot bring themselves to fear that a Grant which has been generously made, and faithfully administered, and which has proved itself, under the Divine Blessing, an occasion of joy and gratitude to hundreds of Christian Teachers, whose earthly lot has been one continued scene of privation and hardship, will under any pretence be withheld; but should this be the unhappy result of the interference of certain Dissenters, they must ever lament the injury thus done to a numerous class of indigent Ministers of the Gospel,—the blow being the more felt because inflicted by the hand that should have been extended for protection; and will fervently pray that He whose Providence is over all, and is especially engaged towards them that devote their lives to His glory, may open other sources for the relief

of these His servants, not indeed more pure, but better guarded against the fluctuation and even caprice of public opinion.

JOHN COATES.

JOHN HUMPHRYS.

WILLIAM NEWMAN.

JOHN PYE SMITH.

JOHN RIPPON.

THOMAS REES.

F. A. COX.

ROBERT ASPLAND.

JOHN CLAYTON, Junr.

THE END.

